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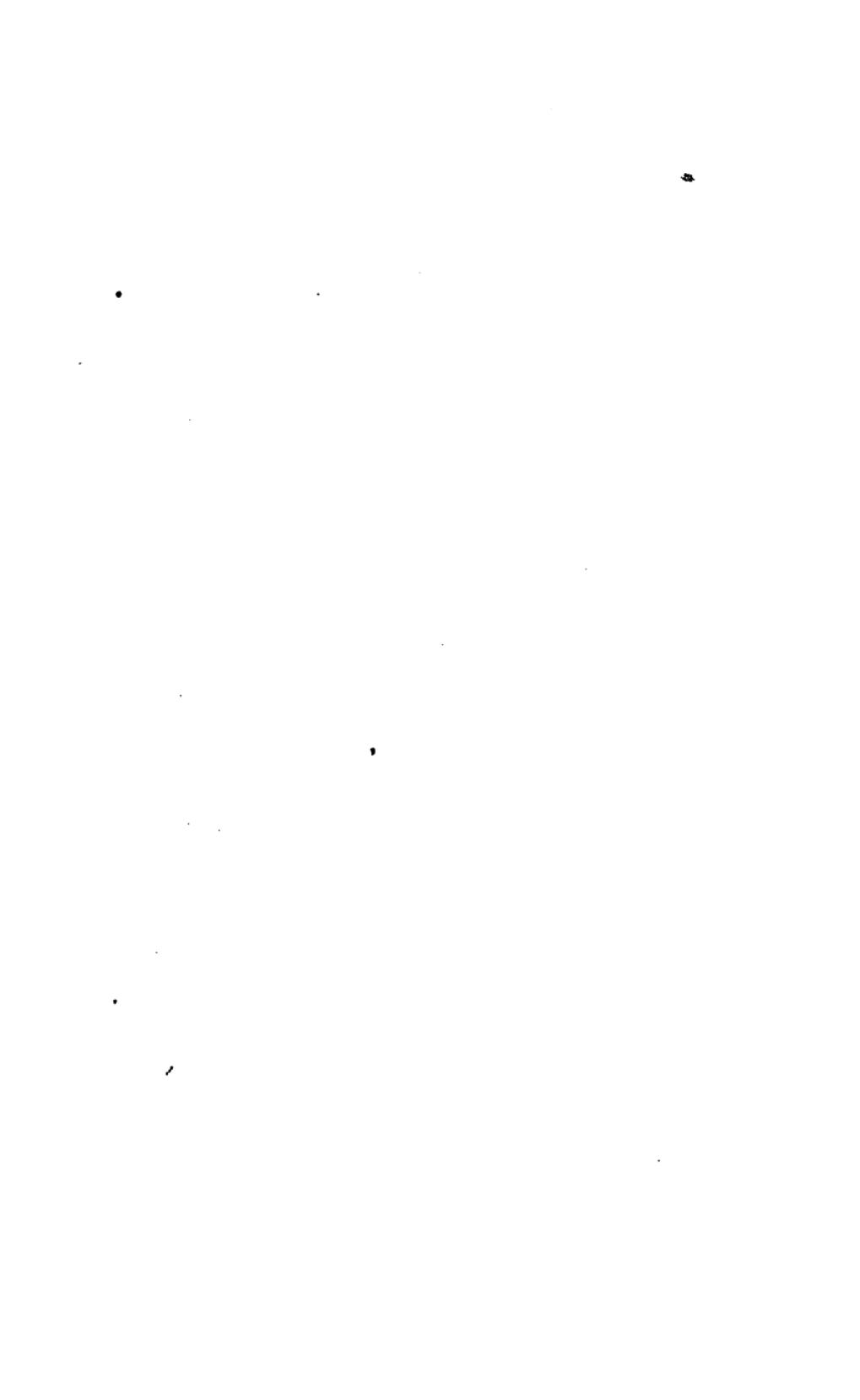


IRISH DIAMONDS:

OR,

A CHRONICLE OF PETERSTOWN.

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IRISH DIAMONDS:

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A CHRONICLE OF PETERSTOWN.

BY
EMILY BOWLES.

"Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and Heaven: that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will,
So strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."



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IRISH DIAMONDS:

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CHAPTER I.

"Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?"

TENNYSON.

THE autumn sun is rising above the long, rugged, interrupted ridge of the Peterstown mountains. Its level rays glint upon their broken summits, and pour into the deep picturesque cups of their hollows. It casts the golden light and purple shadows of September upon their heath-covered sides, and turns the bare and treeless waste into a glory and a delight to the eye—to the eye, that is as a popular writer discerningly observes, *that brings with it the power of seeing*.

Presently the sunbeams clear the mountain ridge, and fall pleasantly on the straggling, up-and-down, in-and-out village, or, in Irish, *town*; and light up the little church and its presbytery.

the school-house and the monastery, the parsonage and Episcopalian chapel ; and far away the park palings, the oak woods, and the heavy old-fashioned windows of Peterstown Court, the seat of the chief proprietor, Lord Powderhouse.

Two men are on the scene ; one nearly at the turn of life, the other in the very bloom and pride of young manhood. They are standing in a little *land* or enclosure at the meeting of four roads or rough field-ways, marked at their junction by one of those rude sunken crosses so well known in Ireland, dented here and there by worn and moss-grown Cufic characters, written and read by a race long passed away. The young man leant gloomily on his spade ; the old one, shading his eyes, seemed taking in the beauty of the scene.

"Now it does one's heart good to be up wid the blessed sun !" he exclaimed, drawing a deep breath. "An' blessed be Him that made it, and hung it up in the sky, as a light to cheer the world. See there, how it kindles the holy cross on the church, and shines on Father Murphy's winder. (May the heavens be his bed !) Why should ye be cast down, then, Randal boy ? have we not a true shepherd to look after the flock ?—good luck to the same !"

"That's true to ye, Father Michael," replied the young man, smiling faintly. "But look here. You may shut your eyes if you will, or stop them there where ye are looking ; for you can govern yourself, father, with a hand which I cannot. But could ye not look then, too, on further—to the house of the fox Moylan, and of the badger

Israel Brooker, and of the wolf, too, ating up the flock, both wool and flesh, the Parson Hall? Can the shepherd, as ye truly call him, drive out the beasts of prey, or keep us an hour safe?"

"Tut! tut! Randal boy; ye take things too fierce like, as you boys are apt to do. Ye're sore, too, and no blame to ye, not being able to marry your girleen; an' sure, though she's my own, I'll say that a sweeter and gracefuller maid never knelt before the altar, with her own true boy, than my Una. But take patience to it, boy. I've lived through such times as you've never seen, an', please the Lord's mercy, never shall see again in ould Ireland. An' there's better coming yet, for ye have faith in the Queen of Heaven and the saints, an' have made yer offering like a true Catholic; and soon there'll be a door opened to you when ye least look for it. My lord means well enough; and though Moylan has an Orange heart in him, and comes of Scotch blood, I'll warrant Father Murphy will walk through his plans with his eyes shut, and will get Father Cyprian to back him. The Lord will help us through, if ye only keep to your faith."

"I know I *ought* to be good!" vehemently ejaculated Randal, striking his spade into the rich earth. "Except yourself, Father Michael, there was not such another in Peterstown as my father. There never was any of our kin in the Petty Sessions Court, nor ever shall be—unless—"

"Unless—" repeated the old man, turning full upon him; "unless what?"

His eye might well rest there with a father's

pride. Randal had raised himself to the utmost of his six feet two of stature, with knotted corded arms folded tightly across his broad square chest. With his proud head, covered with dusky brown-tipped curls ; his large brown eyes fixed in fiery resolve ; his dark clear cheek, flushed with conscious power ; his clean cut nostril, open with defiance,—he looked the very embodiment of Will, set and bent to mow down all obstacles in its path.

“ Unless what ? ” he proudly repeated. “ Unless they drive me to a bigger court with a blacker crime ! Father Michael, I tell ye I fear myself. Peterstown has become a bad place for me now. There has been such upsetting with the agent ; such threats and bad language with the Scripture-reader ; and through it all such driving about that infernal rent, that with waiting and dangling for Una, I’m not the boy I was ; and if it weren’t for her—God ever bless her ! —I’d take a berth and go across the sea to-morrow ! ”

“ An’ I wouldn’t blame ye,” replied Michael pityingly ; “ I wouldn’t blame ye, dear. I feel all ye say and have suffered. There’s one who knows it all ; an’ do ye go up and spake to his reverence, and take counsel wid him as is set over us for that. See there—”

“ What are ye doing there, father dear ? ” said a bright clear voice at his elbow. “ Have you and Randal been struck of a heap by the good folk this blessed morning ? ”

Both the men started and turned, and at the sight of the young girl, who set down a large basket by her father’s side, Randal’s face changed

to a rested and beautiful expression, which he seemed to catch from the fresh and pure happiness that glowed on hers. He stooped down and kissed her cheek, a caress which she seemed to take as it was given—the fit and simple greeting of those betrothed. She opened the basket, spread the little coarse clean cloth on a heap of sods, and arranged the bowl of potatoes, hot in their skins, the large jug of foaming buttermilk, and the great hunches of sweet brown bread, in a style that would have created hunger in even an idle man. She was then going to leave them, and return home with the basket; but Randal stopped her by saying,

"Una dear, stay till I have done, which will be in a few minutes, and I'll go back wid ye to the house—I want a word; and I am thinking of going up to see Father Murphy."

Una fixed her eyes upon him. "What's troubling you, dear?"

"Nothing *now*," replied Randal, with a smile full of confidence and love. "When you are by me, asthore, the sun shines both sides of the wall."

Una saw that whatever there was to hear was for her private ear alone, and the talk was general, till old Michael, reverently standing up, made the sign of the cross, and took his spade again, bidding Una go back with Randal quickly, that she might look to her grandmother, and speed Martin to school. Una did not need many injunctions. She rapidly and neatly put the things together, tied the jug and bowl up in the cloth, threw the potato skins far over the wall; and when Randal

had bestowed his spade in the little dyke on the other side of it, the two were ready to start towards the village. Randal walked on in silence for the first five minutes, and then, turning to his companion, said,

"Una darling, my mind has been too much troubled of late, and I am resolved to make an end of it one way or other. I am going to speak to Father Murphy about it this blessed morn. I cannot stay in Peterstown. It makes me altogether mad and upset, and I fear myself—"

"I knew there was something coming this two weeks," replied Una; and though she spoke calmly, her colour went and came. "I heard a word up and down of Moylan's conduct to ye, though ye know it's not a woman's place to put herself forward in men's affairs. But I said the round of the beads for it before our Lady of Sorrows, for that is better than talk and worry."

"My own girleen!" said Randal, looking almost with reverence at the sweet steadfast face by his side. "I know your strength, asthore, and where ye get it; and I thought I would speak out to ye onst for all. There's other lands and parishes than Peterstown, Una, and other countries too. An' if a strong man cannot get work at Balcarra or some other place, would ye be afraid to follow your boy to foreign parts, even if 'twas across the sea?"

"I'm not afraid to go with ye all the world over, Randal," replied Una, looking up at him with her large innocent eyes; "but there's grandfather and grandmother, and Father Murphy's

school. I think we must wait a bit longer, and see what turns up. But any way, you'll ask Father Murphy ; he'll set us all straight, Randal dear, and maybe you'll get better work at Balcarra than here."

She added these last sentences, for she saw his countenance change at the sad words, "wait a bit longer," as if indeed they had not had waiting enough.

" You'll not put the school in my way, Una," said Randal vehemently, " if there's no other hindrance to our being married out of hand ? "

" I'll put nothing in the way, please God," she replied, with a simple earnestness that set him quite at ease. " My poor schooleen !" she added playfully ; " you have been as jealous of it as if it was a lover."

" And if it isn't a lover, sure it's the beloved one," replied Randal ; " so now I've caught ye out. I would not take ye from Father Murphy, darlin', if I could help myself or you ; but ye would not like me to be always comin' across Moylan and my lord ; and sure ye would not like to be keepin' school here while I was kickin' my heels in Balcarra, like Owen Rooney and the Countess Esmè in the ballad which blind O'Rourke sings of ? "

" No, no, Asthore," replied Una, laughing merrily ; " I'll not be the Countess Esmè any way, with myself in one place and my heart in another. If a woman gives herself, she gives herself altogether ; she mustn't be in two bits, like Nora Macnally's blanket."

Randal laughed so heartily at the illustration that Una's mind felt relieved of a heavy load.

They were now come to the foot bridge crossing the stream which led immediately to her grandfather's cabin ; and bidding Randal "have it all out with Father Murphy, and bring her sure word of what he advised," she took from him the little bundle, and tripped lightly over the moss-grown plank. Randal looked after her for a few moments, and then swinging on his rough jacket, he sprang like a deer over the loose stone walls of two enclosures, and took the shortest cut to the presbytery.

CHAPTER II.

"With you to live alone,
Methinks were better than to own
A crown, a sceptre, and a throne."
TENNYSON.

Randal strode along with mighty steps, firm and even, as if he was trampling upon impossibilities, and turning them to possible facts under his feet. Of all the inhabitants of the village, he had perhaps suffered the most, and the most cruelly, from the course of petty persecution and proselytism which an unsympathising and often-absent landlord, and a narrow-minded agent, had for some time been inflicting upon Peterstown.

Fiery and ardent in all his feelings, enthusiastic and highly wrought in character, intelligent and

discerning beyond the average, and endowed with all those gifts of wit, beauty, bright spirits, and boundless generosity, which wield so powerful an influence over others, Randal Molina was compounded of that stuff which circumstances may raise into a hero, or twist into a criminal of no ordinary dye.

Already but twenty-four years old, he had been some years betrothed to the little schoolmistress, Michael Macnamara's granddaughter, commonly called by an Irish name of endearment "the Pride of Peterstown." They would have been married two years since, but that the agent took umbrage at Molina's free and impudent speech, and owed Macnamara a grudge for his upright opposition to partiality and violent collection of the tithes, and for his being so respected for his wise and pious life as to be, next the priest, the universal referee among the simple tenantry of the village. One time, Molina's cabin was let over his head to a family of "squatters," who sent their children to the Established school. Another, he was refused, on some frivolous pretext, a necessary plot of ground for his potatoes and the cow. Once he was compelled to change both cabin and land, on the plea (which was false) that he had "burned the land," and sown it two seasons with the same crop. Several times offers had been made him to emigrate, that the Scripture-reader might have the opportunity of "converting" and courting Una. For the zealous new parson, the Rev. Exeter Hall, had imported a Scripture reader from Manchester at some expense, who looked upon the peasants of Peterstown much as

a sparrow hawk looks on a barn-yard of fowls, and who seemed to make it his chief business to stir up the evil passions of the natives, and to keep them in a kettle of hot water generally.

It may easily be imagined that a root of bitterness quickly sprang up between Brooker and Molina, which the most trivial occasion might aggravate at any moment to bitter hatred. After striving and fighting manfully with his various difficulties, and sedulously improving his cabin and land, the agent had lately told him that a renewal of his lease could not be given when the rent was paid, as Lord Powderhouse wanted the house for an under bailiff whom he was going to bring from Scotland to the Peterstown estate.

On hearing this Molina had left the agency without saying a single word. He had caught his under lip with a firm gripe, and set his teeth, lest words of overwhelming condemnation to himself should escape him in the first rage and anguish of this fresh disappointment. Then he had rushed to Macnamara's cabin, where, finding old Nora alone, he had knelt down beside her, and poured out the full tide of passionate feeling which he had hitherto controlled, and swore that no human being should any longer force him to bear this cruel persecution unavenged. Had Nora been any but an Irish woman, she must have quailed at the fiery lava flood that poured from her son-in-law's heart, and perhaps have resolved that a character so hot and stormy should never be linked with that of her only son's child. But the grand old woman's mettle and courage was a match for his own, and without an instant's flinching she said that

if the old country was too hot and narrow to hold both him and Moylan, there was all God's world beside,—other Catholic countries where hearts and hands would be welcome; new lands where bone and muscle could make its own way. Una could follow him to America or Australia, or Spain, just as well as she could settle in her own town, and should not be denied him, even if she never came back to close the eyes of her grandfather and her own. She was promised him by solemn word before God, and no honourable girl could ever take it again. God would take care of His own.

Then checking his vehement expressions of ardent gratitude, mixed with fierce and incoherent curses on his enemies, old Nora laid a hand on his bowed head, as if he had been a child:

"Randal; asthore," she said, "do not speak of enemies as if they were *yours*. The enemies of God, and of our holy faith, and our country, we must resist and root out as far as we can. But if we have those who speak bad of us, and treat us to wrong, we must pray for them and do them good turns, till we melt their hearts. See what *He* said for His enemies;" and she pointed to the little wooden crucifix—"‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’"

"Oh mother, you are an angel!" exclaimed Randal, seizing her hand; "no wonder Una is what as she is, with such a one to overlook her since her childhood. An' that is what makes me more and more mad," he added passionately, "for if we was wed to-day, to-morrow I should be another man, and not myself at all."

"Nay, boy," replied Nora, smiling through her large tears, "I think my girleen would rather have you as you are, and make the best of it wid you. Cheer up, gramachree ; have patience awhile, and trust in the blessed God,—glory be to His name ; He will make a path over the stones for ye, darlin', when His time come. He knows the hour better nor ye."

It was these words, and the grand look of faith and perfect trust in Nora's fine aged face, that were stamped on Randal's mind as he parted from Una and strode towards the presbytery.

CHAPTER III.

"He saw through life and death, through good and ill ;
He saw through his own soul :
The marvel of the everlasting will,
An open scroll,
Before him lay."—Tennyson.

And now he has reached the house, and passed through the lower wicket-gate to the door. A pleasant little court was that in which he found himself, as he flung through the gate. Green as the emerald by which Ireland is always symbolised, and soft as the richest velvet, was the turf which clasped the old runic cross, which, having been found in a neighbouring bog, and presented to the parish priest by the proprietor, made a pleasing and appropriate centre to the grass-plot. It was

more neatly kept than often, alas ! falls to the lot of Irish ideas ; for Father Murphy had been to an English college, and there had laid up certain habits of method and order, which were useful to his parish as well as to himself.

Little did Randal heed either the turf or the tidiness as he rang softly at the bell. The sacristan and *odd man*, who answered it at once, quashed his hopes.

"Not in it?" he repeated, as if all hope had vanished, "When will he come back?"

"Not till the week's end. But will a stranger serve your turn, or must you see Father Murphy himself? Sure, there's a strange missioner come awhile in his room."

A stranger ! Randal hesitated at the unpromising and chilly sound. The old familiar voice and kind welcome that he thirsted for would not be here. But, any way, it was a priest. Maybe he could give a little help.

"Yes, sure," he said, though with a sigh ; "I'll make bold to see the strange jantleman, if he will trouble himself."

"Well, I will say I never saw a jantleman put himself to such trouble and give so little," replied the sacristan. "He makes his own bed any way, and one day I was busy more nor usual, he went for to sweep out his own room. And when I humbled myself that a priest should do such a thing, he spoke so beautiful about Nazareth and the Blessed Jesus, who did everything to help His dear Mother, (honour and glory to them both), that the very tears come into my eyes."

The talkative *odd man* was only stopped by

their coming to the church-door, which led out of a little gallery from the house. Just as he was passing into it, the priest came out of the sacristy vested for Mass. A moment's vexation crossed Randal's face, as he thought how long he should have to wait ; but it cleared away on a little reflection, and he slipped into a seat and buried his face in his hands. He cast himself, body, mind, and soul, before the throne of God, and asked for help as he had not done for the many weeks during which outward trials had absorbed and embittered his mind. Large tears rolled through his fingers in the agony of his prayers, as he took a review of his own strong passions to be subdued, the strong temptations to be rejected, of the urgent occasions of sin into which he was every day driven, or had fallen into by the circumstances of his life. Anger and revenge, the two master passions of the Celtic race, seemed to burn in his heart with a more living force and a more fiery glow. How were they to be quenched ? How was he to live under Moylan, and be content and calm ? How was he to walk side by side in life with Israel Brooker, and see him courting Una on the sly, and not wish to take his blood ?

And then the bell rang ; and in a few moments the priest was lifting up the Lamb of God, the mute and passive Victim, above his head, Who being reviled, reviled not again, and in all things meekly abandoned Himself and His majesty to the scorn and contempt of men.

Randal *felt* the healing influence dropping like dew upon his troubled soul. He knew what was ministering to his sickness, and adored and blessed

it with his full heart. He was powerfully but easily influenced, and the same want of constancy attended him that is usually seen in such a character. At this moment he was mightily strengthened and refreshed ; and when the Mass was over, and the people began to go slowly out of the church, he felt able to look his grief in the face like a man.

A quarter of an hour passed, during which the tall strange priest, who seemed very exact, knelt in the sanctuary, making his thanksgiving. Then he got up and went to the sacristy door, when he signed to Randal to follow him. The priest spoke to him kindly, and, finding the talk was likely to be of some length, sent him into his study, where, he said, he would follow him in a few minutes.

It was not much more when the door opened, and the tall, spare, but powerful form of the priest presented itself.

"Well, my child," he said kindly, "I am very sorry Father Murphy is not at home; but I shall be glad to do anything for you in my power. You will not look upon any priest as a stranger?"

"Thank your reverence kindly, I want a word of advice badly; but maybe it will be troubling you; and a stranger,—I mean," he said, correcting himself, as the eyes he met looked like those of an old friend,—"I mean one who does not know the ins and outs of us here."

"Don't you think you can tell me enough of the ins and outs to set me at home with your trouble? Come! you know, a trouble told is half cured!"

Randal twisted his cap into two or three shapes while he considered how to put his overflowing thoughts into words ; and then he began, and, before he well knew it himself, had told the whole circumstances that we already know, just as he would to Father Murphy himself, and ended with,—

“Father, what I most wanted to ask was, whether Una and I cannot be wed out of hand, and take ourselves a bit away out of Peterstown ; not too far, but to Balcarra, like, or somewhere handy to the father and mother.”

“Out of Peterstown altogether ! But is not Miss Macnamara Father Murphy’s school-mistress ? Could she leave him at sixes and sevens that way, after all his kindness ?”

“That is what I knew your reverence would say,” replied Randal sadly ; “but I have jumped all into the middle of my story, and not told you that Moylan—that is, the agent—has given me sudden notice to quit my cabin and land.”

The priest withdrew his hand with which his face was shaded, with a quick movement, as if of pain.

“Lately, do you say ? Does Father Murphy know ?”

“No, your reverence. It was the day before yesterday. I went to him to pay my rent ; and he wants the cabin for a cousin of his own who is coming here to be under-bailiff to my lord.”

“But you say you have improved both cabin and land by his own acknowledgment ? He could not, in justice, take it from you after that.”

“Ah, sure, I have improved the land !”. replied

Randal, eagerly. "Many an hour have I spent overtime, fetching and spreading and digging-in myself. I took pains, too, with trying a new way of cropping, changing with roots, according to an English farming-book that was lent me. The cow took so well to the roots, and the milk was so good, that I bought a fine lot of pigs, which did rarely too. And the cabin is all thatched and white-washed by these hands."

"Did you represent all this to the agent? Does he know what you have done?"

"He does, father. He said it was all nothing to him; and that I ought to be glad to be let off the fine for ruining the land, for he will have it I have burned it. He said he wanted the cabin, and it was the only one his cousin could go into. He had my lord's orders; and that was enough for the likes of me."

"I will speak to him myself," said the priest, after a short pause. "I shall see him to-day on another piece of business. It would be unjust, unless he has other reasons; and I should like to hear both sides. Do you happen to know of any other reasons, my child? Tell me fairly all you know."

Molina twisted his cap again into sundry forms not exactly to be found in Euclid; and then, looking up with frank trust, though his face flushed and darkened, he said,

"Your reverence, I don't pretend to see round more corners than other people; but I believe the bottom of the thing is, that Moylan wants to befriend the Scripture-reader Brooker towards getting my little girl for himself. I can't name it, your

honour, without longing to break his bones ; and that's the bare truth, there then!"

He got up in his excitement, and walked to the window.

"Now that is a truth I don't like to hear," said the priest, in a decided but friendly way.

"Come, Molina, be a man. Put away such a temptation and childish excitement, and trample your passion under your feet. If you cannot make up your mind to do this, my child, I warn you that there will be no blessing from God ; for you and everything will be thwarted and go wrong. This is a very serious matter. Your landlord is a Protestant, and of course wishes to increase his Protestant tenantry and get rid of Catholics—naturally enough. His agent openly avows himself an Orangeman, and will back up his master, or even take a stronger line. Your 'little girl' is the schoolmistress of the place, and seems to have the good-will of both parents and scholars."

"There ye're right, father, God love her!" ejaculated Randal warmly.

"If she was removed, I suppose it would be difficult to supply her place, and would throw a great bother and fuss in Father Murphy's way,—who deserves your consideration above all, as your priest and true father. If you were to fall out with Brooker now, and even if you are not exceedingly careful of your looks and words in his company, you will make an upset which will be hard to get right again. You will be marked as a turbulent, quarrelsome fellow, of whom the town ought to be rid ; and Moylan may then justly come down upon you, and send you to the right about.

If you put him in the right, you will help to put the Catholic tenants, and your priest, and our holy faith itself, in the wrong."

" You speak truly, father; I see it clearly now; you say well," replied Molina earnestly. " Then I'll strive to keep as clear of Brooker as the devil does of holy water, I will. But, oh, father!" he added, with a sudden and beautiful change of expression, " If we was but married, Una and me, *she* would watch over me and keep me from harm a great deal better nor I can do it myself. My mind would be at rest, like; and I shouldn't always be in a fret and a fume. She knows it as well as I know it myself, she does."

" Is Una for marrying at once? Would she come and speak a word to me herself, do you think?"

" Would she not, then? Troth, glad would she be to have the help I have found in your reverence; but she would make me come to-day, that I might have some counsel what to do. She would marry me directly if I were right about one thing."

" What is that?" said Father Fitzsimon. " Tell me what Una thinks."

" Father," said Molina, hesitating and flushing crimson again, " It is if I would be friends in my heart with Moylan and Israel Brooker," replied Molina. " I know I have been pretty bad against them both; and that has kept me many a time from my duties. And Una says truly that she is a Christian girl, and will have none but a Christian man for her husband."

" Una is in the right of it," replied the priest.

"Tell her to come and speak to me as soon as she can,—this evening, if possible. And, my child, do you bear in mind what I have said. Hatred and discord and bitterness of heart will bring no blessing on any of us; and on you, Molina, and on the girl you so truly love, they will bring nothing but a curse. God bless you, and give you strength to cast them out!"

"Amen to that, then!" fervently exclaimed Molina. "And I heartily thank your reverence; and good morning to you kindly. And will I tell Una to come up and speak to you this evening?"

"Do so. Any time she likes after her school-hours."

If any one had been at hand to make a photograph of the two that stood in that room during the last sentences of the conversation, it would certainly have been one of no common beauty. The earnest, vivid face of the listening peasant, turned towards the priest as he stood leaning against the window; the rich colouring, the look of exceeding ingenuousness and purity stamped on his brow, making it almost the face of a child, while the broad chest and sinewy limbs showed even gigantic strength.

The other figure was in strong contrast to Randal's. Originally of a powerful build, tall and square, it was brought down, by abstinence and mortification, and the studious deprivation of all natural pleasures, to a spare frame of bone, stooping and bent when sitting, till a third of its height was lost. The head, however, by its expression of power, gave a fuller idea of dignity than any amount of flesh, or weight of muscles could have

suggested. The square, massive brow, furrowed more by thought than age; the heavy locks of dark-grizzled hair; the clear, thoughtful light of the deep-set eyes; the mobile but deeply-cut and underhung mouth, equally capable of the keenest edge of sarcastic wit and the stern utterance of remorseless decrees,—such was the Strafford-like face, whose speaking and historic significance added solemnity to his last warning to Molina. In that harsh countenance, and in those dark, responsible eyes, there now shone a majestic beauty of no earthly expression,—a look of yearning and apprehensive sorrow, such as may have passed over the Sacred Face of Christ when He wept over Jerusalem, and which, once seen, could never again be blotted from the mind.

The priest looked upon Molina, in whom he had become greatly interested, with the love which a priest alone can feel for a soul. Would that ardent, fiery, impetuous, but most generous character master the circumstances which thickened round his path in life, or would those circumstances conquer him?

CHAPTER IV.

" Sweet lips, whereon perpetually did reign
The inner calm of golden charity,
Were fixed shadows of her fixed mood."

Tennyson.

The schoolhouse was one of the prettiest things in Peterstown. It was at the end of the long, straggling, chief street, on the road leading out to Duncarra Abbey, to the lake (Lough Carra,) and to the widest depths of the mountain-ridge beyond. It was steep-roofed and stone-mullioned, and clustered with clematis, the great-leaved ivy, and Virginia creeper, which now flaunted in all the autumnal glory of its native home in the west. The schoolmistress's house, or rather rooms, were part of the building ; for Father Murphy had wisely removed the boys' school to another part of the village, where he had built a small house for the Christian Brothers who taught it. Into his own parsonage he had taken the sacristan, who was also organist, and two elder boys, who were in their first degrees of training for the priesthood ; and there they all lived in a kind of community, in great harmony and peace.

As the girls' school-bell is ringing, we may as well go in and see what is going forward, and how Una keeps school. The interior is very simple and neat. There are two groups of desks, one of which is nearly full, and a few scattered scholars are sitting in the other. Before the first group

stands a large black board in a frame, on which a sum is already drawn in clear chalk figures. Coloured prints of the life and history of our Lord hang against the walls, with some good animals and natural curiosities. Near the door is a large crucifix, and under it a holy water stoup, into which each child, as she enters, dips her finger, and crosses herself, making a little rustic curtsey as she does it. At the end of the school, on a pretty carved wooden bracket, (the work of Randal in his winter evenings), stood a pure white image of the Blessed Virgin, under a little wooden canopy made of hazel-nut sticks. By Una's desire and arrangement, the base of the rude pillars concealed two pots of earth, in which a climbing plant and ferns grew, so that, with a little care, the canopy was nearly always covered with a living green. Beneath the image was the mistress's desk, a little raised, and from that rustic throne words of more real eloquence and power than are often heard in crowded meetings or high places, had gone deep into many hearts. And if words are to be judged by the Baconian standard, by the *fruit* they produce, Una's was a sounder philosophy than both Houses of Parliament often put forth.

She stands there now, in her plain black stuff gown, with its little ruff round the neck, and a little cap covering the thick coils of her yellow hair; while something in her sweet youthful face, and the deep wells of her true grey eyes, makes us think of our Lady in her early married life at Nazareth, hallowing her daily labours, and everything she touches, with her lowly prudence and purity of heart.

The clock struck, and as the school-bell ceased its monotonous tinkle, the mistress stood up in her desk, and rang a little hand-bell which stood on its ledge. The children then got up and knelt in their places, and repeated a short form of prayer, ending with Acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity. Then, at a signal given from the desk, a monitor drew out the younger portion of the children to read and repeat Catechism, while the mistress came down to the other group, and gave them a lesson in arithmetic—a very simple, clear lesson, and a simple useful sum. No decimals. Father Murphy ruled the studies, and had decreed that the children were to learn a few things, and to learn them well; good reading, good writing, good sums in the simple rules, good needlework, above all. And, you may be sure, there was a thorough sifted knowledge of Catechism and its meanings.

The consequence was,—that is, the visible, external consequence to the public was,—that when the inspector came during the past month to examine the school, though at first he was thrown into a state of contemptuous despair at the total want of natural philosophy and political economy, and said a great deal to Father Murphy about the incalculable advantages to the physiology of the human mind, and to the formation of the human character, both in these studies and in that of geometry and Algebra,—he was nevertheless constrained to make certain notes in his report, which seemed entirely to satisfy that narrow-minded and obstinate parish-priest, who having the curiosity afterwards to look into that thickest of Blue-

Books in which the damning and saving testimony is rendered of schools and school-teachers, found the following touching Peterstown :—

“ *Reading*—excellent. *The tone and expression leave nothing to be desired.*”

“ *Writing*.—In writing from dictation without mistakes, and in the clear bold character of the hand, this little school could challenge those of far higher pretensions.

“ *Arithmetic*.—Though it is greatly to be lamented that an ambition to follow out this noble study in its higher branches is studiously checked, *in the simple rules it was impossible to puzzle the greater number of the scholars.*”

It is worthy of note, that when Father Murphy shut the book, he had a broad smile on his burly face, and a most wicked twinkle of his grey eyes. I myself believe that he came to the perverse conclusion,—that the physiology of these particular minds, as well as that of the shirts, potatoes, and buttermilk of Peterstown, were sufficiently provided for.

And as soon as you know Father Murphy, you will agree with me, that being, as has been said, narrow-minded and obstinate, he had found in the Blue-Book a Q. E. D. which only confirmed him in the said frame of mind.

While Una’s Arithmetic-class were steadily bent over their slates, a little bustle was heard at the door, and the hitherto attentive children in Kate Mulloy’s class began to whisper and nudge each other.

Through the half open door two little figures,

bare-headed and bare-legged, were seen telegraphing vehemently to the scholars inside.

The whisper broke into a buzz.

"What is it, children?" said the clear voice of the mistress. "What is the meaning of this noise in class?"

A chorus rose in reply,—exclamatory, explanatory, exculpatory; not wholly comprehensible.

"Please, ma'am, its some souping children!"

"Governess, it's the Soupers!"

"Please, mistress, we could not help it; its Biddy and Ellen Rooney!"

"Oh, sure, ma'am, you won't let them in!"

"Hush, hush! Gently, children. Be silent all of you! Kate Mulloy, go to the door, and see what is in it."

There was a dead silence while Kate went down to the door, and returned, leading two little girls of nine and ten years old by the hand.

The mistress left her place, and took the two children with her to the desk.

"Where have ye been all this long while, my children?"

"Ma'am, we went to the parson's school."

A stifled groan, and gestures of horror from the children (Greek chorus).

"How could ye ever do such a bad thing, then?"

"Please, ma'am, Miss Powderhouse found us behind the meal tub one day—mother hid us there—and she threatened mother real bad; and she was afraid of father, and made us go. She cried very much afore she took us; but father had

been sick, and off work for a long time, and there was not a bit in the house."

Groans and exclamations of horror from chorus.

"Poor darlings!" murmured Una, tenderly stroking their cheeks. "Poor, persecuted little lambs, small blame to ye; but, oh, how much to him that trades with religion to sell souls! What did ye learn, darlings? Did they treat you well?"

"Ma'am, they was very kind at first; and they made us learn the English religion," replied the elder girl. "They have a funny Catechism, that says a deal; but only two Sacraments, ma'am; and the teachers made Ellen and me say it every day; and Mr. Brooker, the Scripture man, he come in every day and teached us too. He was very cross; oh, wasn't he cross! And the parson, he come now and then hisself. But for all Ellen was so little, she up and would not say that Catechism; and every day when she should have answered, 'two only,' for the Sacraments, she would cry out, 'there are seven Sacraments!' which put the parson sadly about; and Mr. Brooker said he would beat her with his cane if she carried on like that, for it made all the children laugh."

"Laugh!" repeated Una. "I should have thought they would have been angry too!"

"Oh, no, ma'am," continued the child; "they are nearly all souping children, or sent because their fathers is afeard of the parson or the agent; so they was mightily pleased to hear Ellen out with the truth; and they backed her up, on the sly, to give the parson 'the rale thing,' and used

for to give her goodies as we went home. Then some more took it up, and used to shout out in the Creed, 'I believe in one Catholic Church,' as loud as they could, and other things like that, so that the Scripture-man was right down mad and swearing; and yesterday, when he asked her, Ellen said, 'There are seven sacraments, given by Christ to His Church.' So then he up and reached his cane (as he is always a fingering of it ready), and he gave Ellen a rale good beating, and she will have the marks of it for many a long day."

At this point, the chorus, which had gradually formed into a ring, closely pressed round the mistress and the children, burst simultaneously into loud hisses and groans; but though the school discipline had actually been broken through, Una would not notice it in such a case, not only because of the force of the temptation, but because, with her wise gift of government, she thought the moral force of the example, and the advantage of every thing being openly tested, of greater weight than any conventional *régime*.

"And what did Ellen say after that?" asked Una, when the burst of wrath had subsided.

"She said, ma'am," replied her sister, "that if Mr. Brooker beat her to a jelly, she would always say the rale Catechism."

The breathless hush with which the children leant forward to catch the answer was instantly broken short by a perfect storm of clappings and shouts of applause. Una only smiled, while the tears stood in her eyes. She was certainly not cut out on the Blue Book and minutes pattern. A fresh

round of delighted clapping, which rang round the school, was stopped immediately by her holding up her hand.

"My dear children," said the mistress, "you are right, and I love you all from my heart for praising the words of this little child, your old schoolfellow and sister. Our dear Lord Himself set a little child in the middle of His Apostles, and bade them become like him, or they could not enter the kingdom of Heaven. This little child has come into the midst of us this day, and has given us a lesson. We must be ready for suffering, ready for the scorn and shame of Christ, ready for death itself, sooner than forsake or deny our faith,—the holy faith St. Patrick left us,—of the one true Catholic Church. Now if you were sent, any of you, to the parson's school, (which God in His blessed mercy forbid !) should you have the courage to say what Ellen said, and really to bear the beating she would have had?"

"I hope so, mistress," "We wish we should, governess," "I hope God would stand by us, ma'am," resounded from all parts of the school; and one pale, thoughtful-looking, crippled girl replied, as if from the very depths of her heart, "By the help of God's grace, governess, I would, and be glad."

"I thought this; I expected just this!" said a deep-toned voice, so near to Una as made her start and flush a little, as she turned round to the intruder. Close beside her stood a small, sallow, but striking-looking man, whose straight black hair, brushed back from his face, and exceedingly

bright and deep-set black eyes, redeemed the general *commonness* and insignificance of his appearance. His white neckcloth and long black coat, shabby, but scrupulously neat, seemed to proclaim him a religious minister of some kind.

"I thought this, and I have not been wrong in a single point," repeated he, fixing his cavernous eyes rather insolently on the mistress, but then letting them restlessly wander on meeting her clear gaze. "'The heathen have defiled Thy heritage, O Lord God of Hosts; but Thou wilt deliver Thy own from the snare of the fowler.' Is it well, Miss Macnamara, openly to make your establishment an asylum for truants from the Peterstown school?"

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Brooker; but I thought this was the Peterstown school," replied Una, with a slight indication of a smile; "and excuse me, I cannot call them truants that return to their own."

"His words were smoother than oil, having war in his heart," muttered the other, resting his flickering glance momentarily on Una, and withdrawing it as if in fear of deadly fascination. "Miss Macnamara, without crossing too many words, I am come to look for and to demand my strayed lambs."

"Yours, Mr. Brooker?" replied Una, with calm dignity; "but excuse me sir, I cannot conceive that you reckon the Peterstown Catholics as part of your flock."

"Ma'am," said the Scripture-reader, with his slow and strongly-marked North-of-England accent, "I have many times wrestled with the Lord,

for you, and, armed with that glorious weapon of 'all prayer,' which is every pilgrim's best defence in passing through this desolate valley of tears, I have come out to convince your young but bitterly misguided mind of some saving truth. You have mocked at my best efforts, refused my prayers, rejected my Bible, the true Word of God, and persisted in wallowing still in the mire of Popish delusions and will-worship. Now I must speak plainly to you. *All* these children, all the children of Peterstown and Ballycormack, being under the jurisdiction of his lordship Lord Powderhouse, and of his honourable sister and co-heiress Miss Powderhouse, are also under Mr. Hall's and mine, most unworthy servant of Christ though I am."

"Och ! and that's intirely true, for once ! True for yees is that word, the 'unworthy !' Och ! man, and I'd not be for giving the dear Lord sich a sarvant ; I'd take my discharge and be off wid yees !" echoed audibly, with whisperings and nudgings, among the circle of monitresses and bigger girls, and turned the dark glance of Brooker upon them with an angry glare. Una raised her hand, and there was a dead silence.

"Mr. Brooker," she said, mastering her own indignation and strong repugnance to holding intercourse with this man, "I cannot enter upon any discussion with you in this place. Whatever you may think fit to bring forward in your own mind, and to satisfy yourself, you cannot deny that this school ought to be safe from your intrusion, and the children of Catholic parents from your persecution. Excuse me, sir, if I seem to speak harsh,

or in a way unbecoming ; but I am placed here by Father Murphy, and must uphold his rights and authority."

"Intrusion !" exclaimed Brooker, and his deep musical voice seemed to ring through every corner of the school, as his eye dilated with an evil light, very unpleasant to see. "Take care, Miss Macnamara ; I have overlooked much from you, and much from yon insolent cottier, your lover, forsooth ! But you will find yourself and him in the wrong box, my fine madam ! I *have* prayed for you, and thirsted for your soul, as a zealous pastor and minister of God, to bring you out of the abominations of Babylon ! Now look to yourself ! Look to your old grandfather, who maybe will find himself out of his cabin and land ! Look to your fine handsome lover ; see if he will be in Peterstown a year to come ! Look for him, and what he will have gotten for himself ! And if ye find him through all the length and breadth of Ireland, my name is not Israel Brooker !"

"An' is that all ye have to say for yourself, my fine fellow ?" exclaimed a deep and excited voice at the large window, which, garlanded with Virginia creeper, looked into the little court next the road. The next instant, "with a leap like a deer-hound," Molina sprang into the school, and stood beside Una, who instantly laid her hand on his right arm. His indignant tongue she could not master.

"Have you finished your preachin', Mister Israel Brooker ? Then I'll treat you to some of mine ! I tell you, sir, if it were with my last breath, that you are a base ruffianly coward, a

bully, and a rascal ! You are a coward for comin' to worry and frighten a parcel of girls and a defenceless young woman ! You are a bully, for bragging of power which you know you can never uphold ; and you are a rascal, sir, for daring to insult an honest man's betrothed wife, whose shoes you are too base to black ! No ! Una, my darlin', keep your dear hands to yourself, for I'm gettin' beside myself entirely !"

And so saying, the young giant suddenly pounced upon the weak frail form of the Scripture-reader, and before he could recover speech, breath, or presence of mind, bundled him through the window into the court outside ; when, after uttering terrible curses and threats, he shook his fist with a settled look of hatred at the building, and went off a good deal faster than he came.

CHAPTER V.

" Yet not with brawling opposition she,
But manifold entreaties." — *Tennyson.*

" Oh, Randal dear, how could you !" said Una, drawing a deep breath.

I am sorry to have to confess that she was at the same time laughing.

(Be it known to all concerned that the *Angelus* had been said, and the school quietly dismissed to their between-school " lunch " in the yard.)

" Is it how could I ?" replied Randal, who was leaning with his arms crossed on the front of the desk, looking triumphantly and mischievously in

Una's face. "Troth, asthore, isn't it how could I help knocking the breath out of the spaldeen again the window frame? The very sight of him standing a-nigh to you made me think on the beautiful window in the church, where Eve is a-standin' next to the black Satan—bad luck to him!"

"But you did not think I was tempted to do his bidding, as Eve did, I hope?" said Una, laughing again.

"You deserve to be punished for that!" exclaimed Randal, taking her by the shoulders, and giving her a little shake, and then, as if he could not help it, a kiss. But he released her immediately, and resuming a more serious manner, he said, "But indeed it's no laughing matter that a dirty spaldeen like that should dare to think of you, Una, darlin', at all. It's that makes me downcast. And he wouldn't threaten if he had not a power to do us mischief; and get your grandfather and me once out of Ireland, he might try then to do worser things still!"

"Dear Randal," said Una, laying a hand lightly upon his shoulder, "why do you disturb your mind with such dark troubling thoughts? I wish you could have more faith in God, and be more cool and settled about things!"

"I wish I could darlin', like your own dear self! It's something to look at the sweet look in your eyes, that's only like the eyebright flowers in the brook down yonder. It always makes me better and happier when I see them, God be thanked!"

"Look at better than that, Randal dear! But

sure, if even that helps you,—if God is so good as to put a little light of faith in me,—let us both take the good of it,” replied Una simply. “ Only, Randal dear, if so be as you get into such everlastin’ storms, and cannot keep nor your tongue nor your hands quiet, I think we could do better out of Peterstown nor in it.”

A deep shade fell on Molina’s speaking face as he remembered his Mass and his morning resolutions. Una immediately felt sorry for what she had said.

“ Now surely, asthore,” she said, with that pleading grace, that loving submissiveness, that marks her countrywomen above all others of their sex,—“ surely there’s no need to be cast down for one little silly word ! Don’t mind my foolish sayings ; but tell me however you got here at this time of day. Weren’t you at work all morning on Cochrane’s land ?”

“ I shall work for him over-hours instead,” replied Randal. “ Una darlin’, I went to see Father Murphy the morning. He isn’t in it just now ; but I saw a strange gentleman, Father Fitzsimon, from beyond Duncarra ; not that he seems strange to me at all,—for a kinder, nor more homelike and easy, I never see. An’ he wants to see and have a word with you, asthore, as soon as he can get it.”

“ Now ?” said Una, starting up. “ Oh, then, why did you let me go on idling here ?”

“ Nay, nay, darlin’, he said—‘ this evening ;’ and he is a very exact gentleman, Larry Brady says ; he is up with the lark the mornin’s, and out of the sacristy door with the first clock strik-

ing. An', Una darlin', I heard his blessed Mass this mornin', and I took it to heart to forgive Moylan and Brooker, and all the lave on't ; and there, now, you see, the devil has been too strong for me again, and it's all as bad as ever !"

" Now that's the only untrue word ye've said yet," replied Una caressingly ; " for if it had not been for that Mass, maybe you would have beat him badly, or laid it on worse with your tongue. And now he is not harmed at all ; only kindly lifted out of the window, far easier than he deserved—for in truth it was a dirty action to come here, and me alone with the children—and he to be talking against our religion, too ! And what you said was only the truth, and perhaps will be a lesson to him to save his bones whole for another while. So now, Randal dear, don't be takin' on, but keep out of their way ; and let us see what the good priest wants with me. Perhaps, as he is such an exact gentleman, he may have some good plan in his head to put us up to. And, dear, when you have finished your work to-day, would you look in, and see about the ivy for our Lady ?—sure it wants renewing badly—and then you could go up after with me to the priest's house."

With such and such-like winning and soothing words did Una run on, as she sat in the desk (tell it not to any writer of a fashionable novel !) eating her own bit of "lunch" between the school hours ; and her innocent and loving and wise ways comforted Molina, as a woman's ways are intended to do. He felt himself happier, and "heartened

up ;" and he went off to his work all the better for having been with his "girleen."

It would doubtless be easy for many readers, unacquainted with Ireland and Irish story, in its long course of both systematic and unpremeditated oppression, to exclaim that it is perfectly useless attempting to mend the Irish character ; that it is always cruel, revengeful, impulsive, exaggerated, and that the taste for riot, blows, and curses, is inbred and inborn. It is perfectly true that there must always be an essential difference between the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon characters. It is useless to deny the fact, or seek to reduce it to accidental causes. Nations, as well as separate men, must go through life, and work out their good or evil course, with the characters born with them. They may modify and cultivate, but they cannot wholly change or destroy. The Irishman will always be an impulsive and poetic, the Anglo-Saxon a reasoning and reflecting man. The Irishman will be ready, flexible, and swift, ingenious and subtle of mind ; the Anglo-Saxon will be blunt, stubborn, upright, and a stickler for justice and exact truth. The two characters come in collision at every step they take, and nearly at every word they utter. They might be the greatest help and the most solid advantage to one another : they are an irritation and a stumbling-block each to each. From the very beginning of their intercourse, the essential antagonism of character, acting especially on the relations of dominant and subject races, has tended to make this irritation more fixed and galling. And the

question, the vital underlying question, of difference of religion, has been so cruelly and brutally handled, so obstinately and stupidly mismanaged by the dominant race, that, notwithstanding the softening influences of time and use, the two nations still present the unsatisfactory parallel of varying streams, which flow alongside, chafing and remonstrant, but never mingling or united.

Some may perhaps exclaim that there are pictures in these pages too highly coloured; party exaggerations, the overstatements of an enemy, unwilling to allow what has been done to remove all irritation between this country and the fiery and still reluctant "Sister Isle." They indignantly cry out that for many years, at least since 1825, everything has been done, both by Parliament and in private, to heal the "wounds" so persistently sung by poets and patriots, but which, as far as reality goes, rank in their minds with the wooden legs and stuffed humps of the professional beggars, who, after parading their various wretchednesses during several hours of the day, retire to the pleasant variety of ducks, green peas, and bottled stout at the appointed tavern. It is easy for those who have grown up within the last few years, and who have no Irish connexions or sympathies, to talk in this strain; it is even most natural, pardonable, and almost unavoidable. They may be allowed to point complacently to the Poor Relief Bill, to the Fisheries and Public Works, to the drainages of bog land, to the apportionment or sale of Encumbered Estates, and then triumphantly to ask, What more could be done for Ireland than has been done? How could

this ungrateful and most irrational people be more cared for or better governed, or in any way more fostered and cherished, than it is by the paternal legislation ?

We do not deny that much has been done, in a happier age, more sensitive to honour and refinement than its predecessors, under a sovereign whose whole example has been shining with kindly humanity and domestic virtues, to blot out the deep-dyed stains of three hundred years of such cruelty and savage wrongs as have never disgraced any other history in the world. Let English writers* who piously hold up their hands at the conduct of the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru, look in the mirror of Irish history, and there behold how their forefathers treated a Christian people. Let them even read the records of "sixty years since," at the close of the eighteenth century, and after carefully noting the details of the wanton murders of priests and laymen; the wholesale burnings of houses and entire villages by the Wreckers;† *the throwing out of women, with their babes of an hour old, in the snow, while their homes and bedding were burnt beside them*; the lawless driving out of hundreds of Catholic families at once, in the depth of winter, and at midnight, for the sole cause of religion; the tortures and floggings, even to death, without a shadow of

* As in that powerfully written and most unjust of the works of Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho!*

† The Wreckers were the first foundation of the Orange societies and lodges; so called because they wrecked, or pulled down, the houses of Catholics, under the usual pretext of their being rebels.

trial or offence ;—let them note these things, and then decide whether the “wounds” of Ireland are a symbol of romance, or whether, to this hour, the life blood does not still flow.

Nor will it cease to flow until the absurd anomaly ceases of providing a dominant Established Church of one religion for a nation of another, and obliging the nation to support both its own and the one which they detest. It will not cease while the ministers of the state religion are not only looked upon as “alien” in blood and in faith, but are also regarded by the people as police magistrates, church rate collectors, and oppressors of the poor. It will not cease while the Catholic faith of a Catholic nation is merely tolerated, as on sufferance and by courtesy of the conquerors, because tolerance and indifference are the fashion and spirit of our time ; but tolerated with grudging, and open or ill-concealed contempt, as African consuls or Indian governors tolerate fetish-worship or caste-laws—with haughty, scornful pity for the superstition and its slaves.

The Romans were wiser in their heathen generation than we “in a greater time.” They ruled their annexed provinces in that large wisdom which freely left all other things as they were : habits, customs, lesser laws, religious observance, they not only sanctioned, but treated with consideration and respect ; and it was this spirit and policy alone which for so many centuries held together the discordant elements of that most marvellous of all the empires of the earth.

CHAPTER VI.

" Whose spirit, antithetically mixed,—
One moment of the mightiest, and again,
On little objects with like firmness fixed."

Byron.

The bell rang with a loud, cheery, congratulatory peal in the bell turret of Peterstown Court, the seat of the Lord Powderhouse. Let no one innocently imagine that it was the bell for morning prayers, much less, alas, for the Sacrifice of the Mass, which had once been daily offered in the Court chapel, to the refreshment and benefit of the ancient inmates of the old house, since bestowed by Cromwell upon one of his English Puritan followers. Many a time had the O'Brien Blakes heard Mass there at earliest cock-crow before going forth to battle, or to the sports for which that country was famous; and many as were their sports, and still more numerous their battles, it had never been known that a Blake died without a priest, nor went "unhouselled, unannealed"** into the next world. A brave, hearty, and most generous race were they; but after undergoing every kind of torture and loss during the terrible "Hag's War" in the reign of Elizabeth, the last representative of the family was hanged and quartered in his own grounds by Cromwell's soldiers, his head stuck over the gateway, and the estates and house made over to the

* Without the Viaticum and last anointing.

officer commanding the detachment, who received his name from the number of houses he had burnt and blown up.

The present occupant of these good things was made of other stuff than his gunpowdery ancestor. He was an indolent, timid, good sort of man, full of prejudices, but kind of heart, and much led by the triumvirate who just now held the reins, viz. his sister, his agent, and the rector of Peters-town.

At this moment, having been carefully sponged, and tubbed, and *douched*, the bell in the bell turret signalled to the lieges of Peterstown that his lordship was about to receive the reward of his labours in the substantial shape of breakfast. So down he went, letters in hand and spectacles on nose, by a massive oak stair-case, and through a broad gallery hung with tolerable pictures, and an ante room thickly carpeted, to the dining room, where the table was laid with game, curled ham, eggs, hot rolls, barley scones, fresh fruit and preserves, tea, coffee, and chocolate,—in short, all the et-ceteras of an elaborate and luxurious breakfast, such as modern self-indulgence craves and requires.

Behind the silver tea-kettle and lamp—handsomely chased and engraved with the Powderhouse arms and fiercely suggestive motto, “I fire my way to fortune”—sat a lady reading the *Times*, and apparently too much engrossed in some of its topics to pay much attention to Lord Powderhouse, who hemmed several times, and fondled a handsome English spaniel that moved lazily to meet him, before she looked up.

"Good morning, my lord," she then said curtly, and returned to her lecture of the *Times*.

"Down, down, Die ! you must wait till I have begun myself, at least. Why Dollie, what have you got there so interesting ? Any foreign news ?"

"Yes, Clodo, plenty, and good news too. Rome is evidently on its last legs. This poor foolish old Pope seems to be dying in good earnest now, and then there will be an end of the Papacy, and we shall have a new state of things. They are collecting subscriptions for changing St. Peter's into an English—I mean an *Anglican*—Cathedral ; and I really think we might go to the opening. I should like that. But what I have just been looking at now is the audacious conduct of the English Roman Catholics. Really, considering their near extinction, it is astonishing how they keep up their insolence to the last ! They are clamouring about their schools, and workhouse people, and prisoners, as if they actually had a *right* to be heard. I never did see such impertinence ! Why, they will soon be all in prison themselves. I wish they would learn to know their place !"

"Well, well, my dear Dollie, I think it is our place to have our breakfast at this moment," said the more pacific nobleman, tucking a corner of his napkin under his ample chin. "What have you got there—grouse ? I would rather have some snipe, if you please. Pass the Devonshire cream. I hope it is thicker than it was yesterday. Shall I send you a roll ? Thank you. Tea for me, if you please. Have you seen anything of Hall ?"

"He was here just now. He is gone out on a

little errand for me, but will soon be back," rather mysteriously replied Miss Powderhouse, as she prepared her brother's tea.

Accordingly, very shortly afterwards there came in, meekly and humbly, and sliding rather than walking into his place, a tall, thin, lathy looking clergyman, badly put together as to the knees and ankles, and narrow and stooping about the shoulders, and who altogether seemed to have become bent and limp by perpetual bowing, and perhaps by never knowing exactly what his opinion upon any subject was until he had heard that of the person with whom he was conversing. This was the Very Rev. Exeter Hall, a minor canon of Cokeborough in the north of England, and the Protestant rector of Peterstown, where he was installed in a comfortable parsonage, with glebe lands and everything conformable to his excellent income of £600 per annum, and somewhat more than conformable to his select congregation, which, including the agent, his schoolmaster, and the Scripture-reader, amounted to sixteen souls.

In the absence of legitimate duties wherewith to fill up his time, Mr. Hall made himself ample amends by carrying out the wishes of Miss Powderhouse and those of the Anti-Mark-of-the-Beast Society, by proselytising the whole parish and township of Peterstown. Having been strictly reared in the lowest of Low Church or "Evangelical" views, and conscientiously believing all that he professed, Exeter Hall firmly held the following articles of belief:

1. That all Papists are idolators, worshipers of images, wafers, and the Virgin Mary.

2. That confession is a means of buying leave to commit sins according to a graduated scale of payment; and that absolution is granted on a corresponding sliding-scale of compensation.

3. That all Popish priests and educated persons of the same communion are thoroughly aware of the mummeries and absurdities of their faith, but keep up a decent appearance of belief and union in order to maintain and spread the "system."

From these comprehensive premisses he deduced the not unreasonable conclusions that it was a good and beneficial act to religion and mankind in general to "convert" all Papists by any and every means, and to chase Popery itself by main force out of every state in the world.

In these views he was supported by Lord Powderhouse, but far more so by his sister, who was actuated by certain feminine notions of zeal, imaginativeness, and a strong prejudice against all priests, and Father Murphy in particular, who had often defeated her best-laid plans. Added to this was a chronic force of indignation at the insolence of any liegeman opposing his lord and master; and a fixed idea that if Ireland could be sunk for twelve hours in the Atlantic and reappear a new Emerald Isle, purged of all Popery and its belongings, it would be a second Paradise upon earth.

But it is necessary to have experienced the actual results of the feelings engendered between the descendants of English settlers, whose hold upon their property depends upon their keeping the ascendant by fair means or foul, to realize the

mind of an Orangeman, or, in Irish language, "a black Prodistan."

On this particular morning the Very Reverend Canon Hall appeared more than usually overwhelmed and cast down by the aggressions of Popery. The roll transferred to him by his lordship's right hand remained untasted on his plate; the tea, quickly administered by Miss Powderhouse, and sweetened with his own uncounted lumps of sugar, stood by its side untouched. Something was evidently "rotten in the state of Denmark."

"Did you succeed, Mr. Hall?" inquired Miss Powderhouse, touched by the manifest discomfiture of her ally.

"Yes, madam; that is—ahem!—I succeeded so far as to see Brooker."

"But not to much purpose, I am afraid. Something is wrong, Mr. Hall; but pray eat your breakfast. You have not tasted a thing this morning."

"I beg your pardon for seeming presumption," replied Mr. Hall, bowing his head; but I hope I may say with truth, 'the zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up, and I have forgotten to eat my bread.'"

He crumbled the roll into his tea, and sighed deeply.

"What is that?" asked my lord, rather astonished at so familiar and apposite an exposition of the Psalmist. He turned his capacious person a little from the broadsheet of the *Times*. "What is up, Mr. Hall? Good morning, my good Sir;

you came in so quietly, that I really did not observe. Is there any bad news in the village?"

"Ahem! I cannot say *news*, my lord," replied Hall, sighing again; "but there is the renewal of the same bad events which mark this devoted place, where the fierce wolf watches to destroy the flock. My lord, the zeal and watchful care of your admirable sister (a humble bow) pointed out to us that the Rooneys from Cahir on the mountain, whose parents I at length induced to withdraw their children from the pestilent vapour of the Popish school, had been remiss in sending them to your school-house for several weeks; and I sallied forth this evening to find Israel Brooker (the true collie-dog over my flock) before he started on his daily rounds to the remoter cabins. I was, happily, in time to arrest him, and learned with grief that the Rooneys had been entrapped again to the priest's school; that he, Brooker, had followed them actually into the jaws of hell, that is, the school-door,—to demand his strayed lambs; and that he had, I almost shrink from uttering the insult to your lordship and your honourable sister—that he had actually been thrown out of the window in the most ignominious manner by a ruffian named Molina, the lover and follower of the priest's schoolmistress!"

"Out of the window! Heyday, that's a serious matter!" exclaimed my lord; and a dark red spot rose to each cheek. "This is rather too insolent!"

"Insolent! ay, my lord. Now you will believe!" exclaimed Eudora Powderhouse, getting up from her chair in violent indignation. "Mo-

lina, too, a brute who ought long since to have been transported out of the country, if he does not rather deserve to be hung ! He dare touch our Scripture-reader ! Well, Clodo, if you sit tamely under this, I hope you have made up your mind to be attacked yourself next ; and then, I suppose, you will say again that Molina is to be pitied ! ”

“ Certainly I should say he was to be pitied,” replied the kind-hearted nobleman, smiling in spite of himself, but uneasily ; for he was always rather uneasy when Dollie was “unearthed,” and in full chase after the tenantry question ; “a savage ruffian, such as you describe Molina to be, must be exceedingly to be pitied at all times, my dear. But there are others who must be looked after too ; and I will certainly not pass by this extraordinary transaction. I shall either see Molina myself here, or send for Moylan this very day.”

“ Send for Moylan, Clodo,” said Miss Powderhouse ; “ send for Moylan. He knows these wolfish peasants, and is up to their artful, lying ways, which, Heaven knows, you are not. I wish you *would* profit once by his experience. Your heart is fifty degrees too soft for Ireland and the Irish.”

“ That is a fault that, I am afraid, can never be laid to your charge, Dollie,” replied my lord, nervously picking up the crumbs beside his plate. “ But, my dear, I don’t like to see you so hard and eager against the tenants ; you may lead us all into a great deal of mischief, and add very seriously to my difficulties.”

“ You add to your own difficulties, Clodo, by your absurd weakness and indecision,” exclaimed

Dollie, haughtily walking towards the door ; " and you will never overcome them till you take counsel from firmer and more resolute men. You might take a lesson from the Romish priests there. *They* never scruple or dilly-dally when they make up their minds that a course is the right one to take. They are steady, unflinching, and unswerving when an object is to be gained, and for that I respect them."

" Ah, my dear honoured Miss Powderhouse," broke in Mr. Hall, " you must remember how a tyrannous and blind will is one of the chief characteristics of the terrible Beast ; a crushing, blood-thirsty, cruel tyranny is what they are bred up to, which you would be far from driving his lordship to imitate. Consider, my dear lady—"

" I do consider," ruthlessly interrupted the undaunted Dollie ; " and I consider that if the Irish peasantry are to be ruled by their priests against the landlords and against law and order, all reformation and religion will be completely set at nought ; and we may as well make up our minds to have our throats cut at once, or to be shot through the windows while we are at dinner."

" I hope not ; God forbid !" said my lord, moving uneasily in his luxurious chair, and shifting his place slightly, as if his portly figure had suddenly become a target to some unknown sportsman without. " Your imagination runs away with you so, Dollie, and you express yourself so vehemently, that you conjure up visions which no one else would think of. Do calm yourself, my dear, and let us investigate this matter in a becoming and judicial manner."

"Investigate as much and exactly in the way you please," returned the uncompromising head of the family, curling her lip with disdain. "I shall take my own measures, and come to my own conclusions, as I generally do."

And so saying, Eudora marched out of the room, much as a crack three-decker falls off from the chase of a couple of gunboats, which, having crippled, she considers unworthy of further powder or attention.

CHAPTER VII.

"Meantime I seek no sympathies, nor need;
The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted."—*Byron*.

"What is to be done?" said my lord helplessly.

"I should recommend sending for the agent, my lord," replied Hall, after a solemn pause.

"But would it not be better to send for the young man himself? I often feel as if I ought to see more of these poor, deluded cottier-tenants. Perhaps I might influence them by kindness."

"A most Christian and amiable wish!" ejaculated Mr. Hall.

"But you see," continued my lord, rising, and standing with his back to the fire, "I am so unused to talking to that class of persons in this country. They speak so fast, and in such a strange language, and express themselves in such

a singular manner, that I can scarcely make head or tail of their meaning. And then they get wilder and more flustered, and I more completely puzzled, so that it makes it exceedingly awkward for both parties. They really are an incomprehensible set of people, and it is hard to know how to deal with them."

"Indeed, my dear lord, I sympathise with you entirely," replied Mr. Hall. "It is certainly a heavy burden that is laid upon you—a very heavy burden indeed : He alone who laid it can lighten it to you. I recommend sending for the agent, my lord. It is indeed a complete riddle how to deal with these people. I often feel it so myself when I have not the slightest idea whether they are deeply and properly impressed, or whether they are making game of me altogether. It is a riddle, quite so indeed ! Let me ring the bell?"

"You think so ? Well, yes."

The bell was rung, and a message despatched to Mr. Moylan to come immediately to the Court.

Mr. Hall was justified in saying that Lord Powderhouse bore a heavy burden. It was exactly £12,623 odd shillings and pence per annum, with a numerous tenantry, who were rated to support Canon Hall's comfortable parsonage and glebe, the church which they never entered, and schools which they shunned, and many of whom did not know their landlord even by sight. It must be agreed that this was a very heavy burden for any man's shoulders, especially when it is remembered that an account will have to be rendered for the same.

After the lapse of ten minutes Mr. Moylan had

reached the Court, and was ushered into my lord's study to await his commands. It was not surprising that Miss Powderhouse so strongly advised her brother to send for his agent to investigate Molina's crime, in preference to inquiring into the matter himself. No one could come face to face with Malachi Moylan, without an instantaneous feeling that he was confronted with a man capable of energetic decision, and an inflexible will to carry out what had been decided upon. The bronzed, handsome face; the high nose, with its thin nostrils; the thick, straight eyebrows, nearly meeting over the eyes; the steely-blue eye, with its dark lashes; the under-hung, firmly-cut mouth; the hard, fine-strung, sinewy figure; and the sharp ringing voice,—in short, the whole appearance, from the crown of the straight, narrow head to the equally straight, narrow heel, most clearly and unmistakably betokened the hard, clear, definite, and unimpressionable spirit that reigned within. There is a mingled race of the Scottish Celt, the Irish Celt, and the English settler on Irish soil,—the Cromwellian and Orange colonist,—which is as distinctive and marked in Ireland as the pure Milesian and the Irish descendants of the Spaniards. To this race of triad blood Moylan belonged.

"Good morning, Moylan," said my lord, as he found his agent erect upon the rug. "Pray sit down. I sent for you so early to beg of you to investigate the circumstances of a curious squabble between Israel Brooker and a young man named Molina. Do you know anything of Molina?"

"Yes, my lord, I do indeed. Just lately I gave him notice to quit."

"Ah, I was not aware of that. Has he been a bad tenant?"

"Not exactly, my lord. No, there was no fault to find on that head; but his cabin is the only one that is decent enough to lodge Macbriar, the new under bailiff."

"Ah, the under-bailiff? I see. It was for a house, I think, that he waited?"

"It was, my lord; and also it was a good opportunity of getting rid quietly of a very dangerous character, which I am sorry to say Molina is."

"In what way dangerous? I have heard this before. Explain your meaning."

"My lord, Molina is a young fellow who, if he considers himself offended, would stick at no crime."

"Ah, indeed!" uneasily exclaimed my lord, glancing towards the window as if again painfully reminded of rifle-balls and long shots. "Dear me, what a country this is, where one never knows if one's life, even, is safe! But then, sir, confound it all, what a foolish thing to go and give the fellow notice to quit!"

The slightest perceptible sneer dilated the nostril and curled the thin lip of the agent. He took good care to keep his eyes respectfully fixed upon the carpet.

"My lord," he replied, after a short pause, as if he had been weighing his employer's suggestions, "if I were to bend to the people in that manner, or to show the slightest fear, I should lie entirely

helpless at their mercy. The Irish Romanists, low, ignorant, and impressionable as they are, are accustomed to be treated by their priests with an absolutely despotic power. They are governed, literally, by the cudgel and the lash; and if the landlord is ever to command their respect, it is the lash which he must keep constantly before their eyes. I have lived long in the country, my lord, and my father and grandfather before me, and I am firmly convinced that both the government and the landowners must make their choice between two alternatives,—either to have their tenants-at-will loud, insolent, open-mouthed, and rampant above their masters, or firmly crushed under their heel."

Still standing before the fire, the agent raised his head a little more at these last words, and ground his foot upon the hearthrug, as if the whole Irish nation lay in helpless serfdom under his slender boot-heel. He raised his cruel eyes, and even my lord was struck with the cold flash of the steel.

"There is truth in your remarks to a certain extent," he replied, "but you carry them too far, and I do not like the sound of the words. I do not wish, I should be sorry to think it necessary, ever to 'crush' any of my poor tenants. I wish them to be persuaded of the saving truths of our pure religion, and to be drawn kindly from their errors, but not to be driven and goaded like brute cattle. I am afraid there was too much of that spirit in the last century, and it has given the poor a bad impression, though no doubt those stories are very much exaggerated. Did you give Molina notice to

quit on any just grounds, and did you give him time? It would be better to run up a house for Macbriar than to drive out an industrious, good tenant."

" My lord, the grounds were chiefly Molina's own rash and quarrelsome behaviour," replied Moylan, in a moderated tone; for he was thoroughly taken aback by the firm and sensible words of his employer. " Molina can never let the Scripture reader alone, and is always doing him bad turns. Brooker vows vengeance against him, and it keeps the town in bad blood. Besides, my dear lord, the season is getting on, and I do assure you Macbriar is terribly wanted. It is impossible (I do not wish to insist, or to offend your lordship's kindness of heart)—but it really is *impossible* to keep these fellows at work without a strict hand to look after them."

" I believe you, and I am well aware of your zeal and true interest, Moylan," said my lord. He mused painfully a little, and said again, " I am very sorry the young man and Brooker are at loggerheads. Brooker seems to me to be meekness and charity itself among the poor."

" He is, indeed, as your lordship truly observes, meekness itself," replied Moylan, with another slightest curl of the lip; " indeed, whenever I have seen him at work, he appeared to give an excellent example to the people. I do not pretend to any great piety myself, and cannot quote Scripture like Israel and Mr. Hall; but I believe, my lord, you will find me generally at my work, both for the cause of the Established Church, and my employer, as in duty bound."

"I have not the slightest doubt of it, Moylan," said my lord heartily. "You have always kept one consistent course, and commanded my respect and esteem." Moylan bowed with modesty, and at the same time with self-respect. "But how about the young man? You say he is a good tenant. Has he improved his cabin and land? Is it well cropped?"

"He has manured the land and thatched the cabin; there are good crops on the land now," replied Moylan, who scorned a lie.

"Ah, well, that is very praiseworthy; industry, above all things, in this country, must be cherished and rewarded. He must have a handsome compensation. That, I have no doubt, will smooth away all difficulties. I should like to see him myself, and have a little conversation with him. A kind word or two goes a great way with the poor. If you will be so good, Moylan, send the young man to the Court this evening, and I will see him myself. I assure you I pity these poor misguided peasants very much. Often, when I am riding in the mountains, and I see their suspicious lowering looks, I feel the truest pity for their condition. They seem to look upon me as a tyrant and an enemy. After all, they are dreadfully poisoned by their priests."

A dark shade crossed the agent's face. "Your lordship never said a truer word. And as if we had not a bad one enough to deal with in Father Murphy, he has called in, or the Bishop has sent a strange one into the parish to give a 'mission,' who is as much worse than the other as Satan is than his imps. I track him everywhere, putting

a finger here, and a finger there, and a spoke into every wheel ; so that all the little way Brooker has been able to make, by getting the poorer parents to send their children to your lordship's school, this vile priest has undone by a whisk of his hand. And as your lordship has spoken of it, I must say I think it very hard that Father Murphy should be allowed to go on crossing me about even the management of the land, which cannot be his business at all. He backs the tenants up in their burning and racking the soil, and as long as he does so Macbriar can never carry out the Scotch improvements we planned. Wherever there is a lazy, droning, slovenly pig of a Romanist tenant to be kept in, and a bright, intelligent Protestant to be kept out, there this priest crosses me with his 'rights,' and his 'justice,' and his 'appeals,' till I am forced to wish from the very bottom of my heart that the whole ruck of them, priests and people, were just sent back to hell, where they belong. And I do now, and that's just the truth !"

Waxing warm and Irish in his hatred, Moylan had indeed spoken the truth, and a good deal more of it than he intended.

"I was not at all aware of all this," said my lord gravely, taken somewhat aback in his turn at the sudden opening of the volcano ; "you should have kept me better informed, Moylan, as to the state of affairs. How is it that you have never mentioned to me before anything of Father Murphy's differences with you ?"

The agent knew very well why. He would very little have liked my lord to have heard and seen

all that had gone on between him and the parish priest. Little as he had sounded the extent of Lord Powderhouse's goodness of heart, he knew he was a gentleman and a man of honour ; and he would not have relished his own vexatious, goading tyranny and exaction to have been contrasted with the patience, the endurance, and the brave defence of his own flock which he knew Father Murphy had shown. He dreaded now more than ever, as he gained fresh insight into the natural integrity of his employer's character, and had a glimpse of the dormant qualities which a long course of indolent self-indulgence had obscured, that he should gain an insight into Peterstown politics, and rapidly resolved that dust must be thrown, as softly and quietly as possible, into his eyes.

"I believe, my lord, I have been entirely wrong," he said, in an accent of humbled and self-convicted compunction. "I have never seen it in this light before ; but I believe I have done exactly what I ought not. I have been so accustomed to converse on these subjects with Miss Powderhouse, and to carry all lesser annoyances to her, that I forgot to ascertain whether they were passed on to your lordship. I took for granted, of course, that Miss Powderhouse would do everything that was proper, and that I had no title to inflict a double annoyance. I acted for the best ; but I believe now I was entirely in the wrong."

"That is enough—more than enough ; say no more, Moylan," replied my lord. "I wish every one was as ready as you to see the truth when pointed out. If any letters have passed between

you and Father Murphy, I should like to see them. And pray do not forget to send up the young man Molina this evening. After I have seen and heard him, I should like to consult with you upon the matter, that it may be arranged as soon as possible. Good morning."

CHAPTER VIII.

"His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true."
Tennyson.

Surprised, baffled, disappointed, put out ; all those seething and boiling interior emotions which the thwarting of a strong will and passions stirs up in the depths of the heart were clamouring for an outlet, as Moylan turned his steps from my lord's study and crossed the hall. So he, the puppet, the soft, easy-going, pleasure-loving tool, turned this way and that by the sister or by himself, had become in a few hours transformed into a master, asserting a will and opinion of his own ! He was going, forsooth, to look into his own affairs, and to investigate matters with his own eyes and brains. A pretty kettle of fish if he did ! How was he to be drawn off ? upon what false scent ?

"Oh, the devil take it all !"

Seized by a sharp pang of irritation and perplexity, the agent, thrown off his usual wary

guard, uttered this comprehensive blessing aloud ; and the moment he had done so, was made aware of the presence and close attention of the solemn butler in crimson and powder, who, without changing a muscle of his London face, said slowly,

“ Miss Powderhouse desires to speak to you in the morning room, if you please, Mr. Moylan. This door, sir.”

“ Well, the devil is certainly at hand to help his own !” was Moylan’s instantaneous reflection ; but this time he kept his thoughts to himself.

He followed the solemn butler, reduced to the respectful calm of his ordinary demeanour.

“ I wonder if he has ‘been dismissed, or only well blown up,’ reflected Steadman the solemn in his turn, as he marched at a funeral pace before him. “ I must look after the little keg of mountain whiskey he promised me, if he is going away. I’ll remind him of it as he goes out.”

The Honourable Eudora Beresford Powderhouse —commonly called “ Dora ” or “ Dollie ” by her dear friends, of whom she had a few, and “ Powderpuff ” by her dear deprecators and enemies, of whom she possessed a goodly array—sat near the bay window in the morning room, which she had appropriated to her own special use. As usual, she sat, in the appropriate phrase, *immersed* in papers and business. A very busy and a very papered lady was the Honourable Eudora.

The heavy library table at which she sat was amply furnished with writing materials of the office or parliamentary stamp. A vast blotting book, bound in wood and brass cornered, with a Bramah lock ; a Gothic pile, containing a globe of

ink, sheaves of quills; a strong-minded letter weight, capable of weighing tea and sugar avoir-dupois; rulers and paper cutters of a threatening and business-like aspect; with other etceteras of "an order corresponding." A government despatch box stood on one side, and a large letter box with a padlock—"answered and unanswered"—on the other. Piles of letters, rolls of papers, documents, and official-looking correspondence lay docketed and tape-bound all over the intermediate spaces, and heaped the drawers which stood half-open near her hand. It was evident that if Lord Powderhouse had been somewhat slack and remiss in attending to business, his sister could never plead guilty to the same charge.

As Moylan entered, she "motioned" him to a chair without looking up from the large blue sheet she was revising. She ran it coolly over to the end, folded it, enveloped it, sealed and tied it with red tape, and put it into the despatch box. That done, she leaned her two elbows on the chair, and looked steadily into Moylan's face. After a few moments his steely eyes sank to the floor.

"You are a fool," she said, when this feat was accomplished.

"Miss Powderhouse!"—

"Hold your tongue. I want no subterfuges now. I say you are a fool and you know it. You have kept on dilly-dallying and putting off your opportunities till they are all lost, and now nothing will do but that there must be an explosion, and everything come out."

"Miss Powderhouse, excuse me, how could I

have foreseen my lord's mood? What could I have done but what I have?"

"Oh, be silent; you drive me mad!" exclaimed Eudora, pressing her two hands for a few moments on her forehead. "Foresee a soft man's heart! Is it not always drifting like seaweed to and fro at the mercy of every wave? What could you have done? A thousand things, if you had not been a fool! Could not Brooker have had pluck enough to quarrel with Molina outright, and get him condemned and transported for life? Could not this precious schoolmistress have been carried over the border into another township, and married will or nill? And, above all things, could not that priest have been bribed, or frightened, or harried into being quiet, instead of emptying my workshop, and seducing the children from my schools, and discountenancing my library? Had I not five hundred Romanist children on my books at Ballina, and now there are but five? Have I not three in my workshop instead of fifty-two? I have just sent away Brooker, who brought me his report. Last May he visited and read the Scriptures in seventy-nine families; now he is insulted, or jeered at, or turned out by all but four. The report for the 'Dawn of Day,' and the 'Spiritual Enlightenment of the West of Ireland Romanists' Societies have to be drawn up and sent in this month. Last year they were received in London with deafening applause; this year I shall be covered with shame, perhaps lose my grants,—and *all this is your doing!*"

"Miss Powderhouse, I entreat—"

"No, I have not done yet! If you expect that

I shall go on as I have hitherto, overlooking and excusing and hoping for the best, you are altogether mistaken. You are my lord's agent for the property, it is true ; but you very well know that I got you the situation on the express second condition that you were to help by every means to uphold the Irish Church and the glorious principles of the Reformation. Foolish and weak governments have given in to rebels and agitators so far as to talk against Orange principles and Orange societies ; but you know as well as I do, that Romanism must never really sit in power in Ireland, or there will be an end of us all. You know the oath taken by every Orangeman, and how it is to be kept ; and that he is bound to keep it as long as life holds together. And now, sir, answer me truly as a man. Are you still a true Orangeman, Malachi Moylan, ready if need be, to wade to your knees in Popish blood ; or are you a miserable apostate, hateful and contemptible to God and man ?"

" Miss Powderhouse, these are loud words," replied Moylan, with perfect calmness, rising as he spoke, and crossing over to the rug, where he stood looking down upon her. " If you were a man, I would answer you this instant by laying you flat on the floor, but as you are a lady, and one to whom I am much indebted, I will speak instead. I *am* a true Orangeman, ready to wade up to my knees, or up to my lips, in Catholic blood. I hate the religion, and the slaves of it, and the priests who uphold it, with a hatred stronger than that of death. According to the common form, I say again, I will keep my oath,

so help me God ! As to the other questions you have heaped together (he held up one hand, checking off finger by finger with the other as he deliberately went on)—1. I used every means to force Molina into a quarrel with Brooker. The whole force of Macnamara and two priests alone kept him back. Our good fortune has done this for us now at the school. 2. This being so, there could be no trial or transportation. Now I have hopes of both. 3. If Miss Macnamara had been abducted, as I many times planned, the evidence against Brooker would have been so strong as to bring *him* into the county court, which might have damaged our cause for life. We do not live, unfortunately, in '98. 4. I fined Macnamara for repairs, &c. beyond his means, and offered him, by a friend, land in America. The priest got him money to pay the fine, and hindered him from leaving the town. 5. And last, as to the priest himself, he either *is* the devil, or the devil helps his own ; and if I could I would send him to his master tomorrow, where he and all his brethren belong. But he is such a confounded hypocrite, that I cannot find a single hole in his coat. I have never yet been able to catch him out or trip him up!"

"*Find a hole ! Make one, Moylan ; that will do as well. Fiddlestick ! Can't you trump up some tale of his expulsion from the College at Lisbon, which we heard when he first came ? You make only the skeleton of a story, and I'll engage it shall grow and spread.*"

Moylan fixed his steel-blue eyes on his pa-

troness, and a slight and peculiar smile flitted over his face.

" You are certainly a lady of a fine imagination," he replied; " I think, Miss Powderhouse, this particular romance would flourish best in your hands. I can only say, that if you will rid me of this priest, or, what would be still better, blow a good blast upon him, the tenantry shall give you no further trouble."

" Well," said Eudora, after a short pause, " as to that point, we must see what can be done. On the whole, you have got out of this hobble better than I expected. It is an immense satisfaction that whatever happens you never wince or flinch. If there is anything on earth that I detest and despise, it is a soft man ! You are a good workman, and I should be heartily sorry if you proved unworthy."

" I hope that will never be the case," said Moylan, with his usual calm self-assertion, which never bordered on arrogance. He looked even a little touched, as if capable of a kind of feudal attachment to the chieftainess he served. She held out her fine and sculptured hand, but he did not take it.

" One word more," he said quietly. " My lord insists most decidedly on seeing Molina himself, and to-night. When he comes to the Court, can you manage to have Brooker at hand to make his counter-statement of wrongs ? But be sure, Miss Powderhouse, in that case, to charge him to be exceedingly humble and meek, and so forth, as my lord has noted him especially for these qualities. The meeker he is, the more Molina

will chafe ; and if we could once be rid of him and the Macnamaras, the day is our own. I scarcely think even you quite know my lord. There are stiff points hidden in him which you cannot always govern."

" *You* cannot. I have no fear of that at all. Don't worry me again about him, it makes me too wild ! Good Heavens ! if I were only in his place, just for once, in the House ! And to be condemned to sit here in petticoats, and to see the power and influence he throws away ! For what are we dominant in this fine province ? for what did Elizabeth harry and burn it from end to end, and Cromwell empty its people into the other half of the globe—for what, if we are still to be baffled by one idiotic old man sitting drivelling in a foreign country surrounded by his insolent prelates ? By what magic of sorcery is it that flogging, hanging and quartering, burning and exile, famine and utter destitution, are all tried by turns upon this base, degraded, grovelling, worse than African fetish idolatry, and yet it endures and endures, to laugh us to scorn ? Oh, if I had but power,—power of any sort, at any cost—power equal to my will, to crush it for ever !"

Ah, Eudora, unconsciously uttering the cry of all the enemies of God from the beginning, how often, hereafter, conscience-stricken, will you not recall your words, pondering over the eternal prophecy carried forward for all generations by His Church, "*Quare fremuerunt gentes?*"—"Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things ? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together against the Lord, and

against His Christ.....He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them."

While she echoed these last passionate exclamations, walking up and down the room, folding her arms, and pressing them forcibly together, Eudora would have been a fine study for a denouncing Sibyl. Then, as she finished the last words, she turned and leant both arms upon the back of a high Gothic chair. Her magnificent figure, so dignified in its free majesty; her flushed, absorbed face; the dark eyes dilating and looking up; the expressive mouth and chin, of the true Dantesque mould, indicative of sarcasm and ire; the broad, rippled braids of her purplish hair, coiled round her head in a thick coronet, held together and pierced at the back by two enormous pins of bog oak and gold. Such was the study upon which the eye rested, not with pleasure, but with a vivid admiration mixed with regret and dread. A queenly and noble creature it saw, marred by temper and the rashest pride. Who would have the power to bow down that lofty head with self-knowledge, and tame it under the sweet yoke of Christ? Who would open those lordly, defiant, and most blinded eyes to the truths of the Gospel, and soften them with the tears of humble contrition?

When this should be done, Eudora Powderhouse would serve God as she never yet had served herself or her idols.

Moylan stepped towards her. Of course he had had the best of the encounter this time, as he always contrived to have. He had no flashes of

lofty enthusiasm, or of deep, generous feeling when in the wrong. He calculated and resolved, and steadily pursued his course.

"Have patience, Miss Powderhouse," he said quietly, but in very gentle tones; "do not waste your fine mind in these outbursts; calmness in the long run, will always win; enthusiasm, *never*. Do not lose sight of what has been determined on; and I will let you know whatever turns up. Good morning; I am sure you need some rest."

He took her hand, held it for an instant, bowing with deep respect, and was gone.

CHAPTER IX.

"Strange is the heart of man, with its quick, mysterious instincts;
Strange is the life of man, and fatal or fated are moments,
Whereupon turn, as on hinges, the gates of the wall adamantine."

Longfellow.

That same evening, while Lord Powderhouse and Molina were having their talk at the Court, the particulars of which did not immediately transpire, Israel Brooker, instead of being at hand to forward Moylan's plans, was losing his way on the mountains above Cahir, where he had gone to frighten or cajole the Rooneys. He had not, however, found a single human being in the knot of cabins, though they bore traces of having been very lately occupied, and though he could have *sworn that he heard a shrill whistle as he ap-*

proached the mountain path. The embers of smouldering peat were surrounded by potato skins, and a party of pigs were turning over a heap of offal outside. But not so much as a hair or a rag of a Rooney was forthcoming ; and Brooker, vexed and disappointed, and baulked both of his children and the bowl of potatoes on which he had reckoned, turned homeward in no very sugary mood. Perhaps this mood of cloud and vapour helped in some degree to mislead him ; for he had plunged into a more difficult path than the one by which he ascended, which he thought he knew, and would take him directly down the mountain. Instead of this, it led away circuitously further into its recesses ; and when the lowering evening clouds had settled into a thick drizzle, Brooker came to a turn which convinced him at once that he was in the very heart of Cahir-na-duigan, the wildest amphitheatre of the Peterstown range, and of no good repute for safety, both on account of the lawless distillers and poachers who were said to inhabit it, and of sundry supernatural appearances, the fame of which had spread through all the country round. The pathways seemed to converge to a kind of circle, in which was a cairn, or heap of stones, marking the spot where a murder had been committed. Beside the cairn was a pool in a deep hollow, looking like a "pit of ink." Around, the desolate mountains rose abruptly, clothed only with shaggy heath and broom ; so that, in the gloom of the advanced evening, the sky was nearly shut out.

When Brooker saw where he was, a cold shudder ran through his frame. He stopped to listen

if there was any hope of a passer by, or sign of human life. There was not a sound but the beating of his own heart, which he now distinctly heard. No sights but—ah! Was that indeed a human being, or one of the ghosts that haunted this evil place? A shape of some kind was certainly flitting round the cairn; suddenly it disappeared among the loose stones. Brooker's knees shook under him, and a cold sweat poured through his skin. He had often seen the villagers make the sign of the cross in sudden danger, and now was tempted to wish he could do the same. There is the shape again, flitting away to the desolate pool! It looked into the inky water, and then, suddenly throwing up its arms, uttered such a piercing, mournful shriek as never before smote the Scripture reader's ear. He shivered with horror, for it seemed to him that one of the damned must have poured forth that cry of blank, hopeless despair. Involuntarily he went down on his knees, muttering any texts or verses that came into his mind. Whether the being who was at that moment hanging, as it were, on the very edge of the dark pool, observed him then for the first time, he was too much paralysed with horror to note; but the next minute the shape again changed its place, and with incredible swiftness flitted round to where Brooker knelt. He was too much out of his senses to perceive at first that it was apparently a boy of about twelve or thirteen years old who approached him.

"Get thee behind me; get thee behind me, Satan! O merciful God, deliver me out of his hand! Apollyon, I defy thee; go back into the

pit ! Why do you torment me, doing my Master's business ? Oh, why did I ever come into such a country as this, full of devilment, and all kinds of horrors ? Keep off, I say !"

"Acushla!" was all the answer from the lips of the boy. He came closer to Brooker, and put his hand upon his shoulders. "Is it a living man you are ? *Wirrastru!* I t'ought it was surely Shaun Daragh, the murderer ! He always walks here when the moon is rising. Look!"

Brooker, whose scattered senses had scarcely yet returned, looked round with a shiver, as if expecting some fresh ghostly sight, and saw that the pale shadowy-looking moon was rising up behind the mountain. But if its faint rays gave him at the first glance some comfort, it was quickly dispelled ; for it shone most unmistakably upon a third figure, standing close to the cairn. Again the boy leaped and shrieked with fear ; and before he could recover from the shock, Brooker found his hands pinioned behind him, and a rough grasp at his throat. He struggled sore, but quite in vain. A kind of sack was thrown over his head, blinding him and muffling his voice ; he was dragged some way from where he stood, and then rudely forced down a flight of rude steps, during which passage he felt that he was leaving the free air, and apparently descending into the earth. So great a horror came over him at this idea, that with that and the closeness of the atmosphere he fainted ; and when the arms that had seized him released their hold, he fell prostrate on the ground.

"Is he dead?" whispered a voice; "or is it only a sham?"

"Kick him, and ye'll find out!" was whispered back more hoarsely from another voice.

"Whisht, Murty! he really is give up intirely. Here, loose his head-stall a bit, till I tie his hands and fit, and blind-bandage the eyes of him. The sorrow a bit he *wants* blindin', the poor benighted black Prodestan'!"

"Bedad, there'll be light enough where he's goin'—an' warmth too—chape as fuel will be there," replied the other. "There, me lamb of Satan, ye've got yer bracelets and ornaments on yer finely. Ye're ready for a wake or a weddin' any how!"

"Hould a bit, till I get a drop of the mountain dew down his black, prachin' throat!" said the more humane of the two, reaching up to a shelf roughly knocked out of the wall of rock. "There, now he's tinded and dry-nursed to perfection—and he's comin' to. So, Murty, ye *bodagh*, come off to the work. Where's Shamus? Shamus! Shamus, I say, bad scran be to you! Come in, will ye? instead of playin' the fairish and boddle all night out in the mountains!"

Thus affectionately adjured, the boy who had first been seen outside the cairn came lightly down the steps, and along the passage into the cave,—for such it was,—and, after executing a kind of wild dance on the floor, went to a recess in the wall, took from thence a quantity of peat-turfs and drift-wood, and began to build up, in the most scientific way, a fire in the rude furnace which his rushlight disclosed. Having done this, he ap-

plied himself to a large bellows, which was rudely adjusted at the side of the furnace, and soon blew up a ruddy glare, which brought out a scene as wild and picture-like as has ever been touched by an artist.

The cave, which was low and butting at the entrance, rose to a vast height within, and seemed to be excavated in many hollows or chambers, one within another, far into the mountain. Long, spiral, crystalized stalactites hung pendant in the most fantastic forms from the curved roof, which, as the fire shot up its ruddy glow, sparkled and shimmered with extraordinary brilliancy, and seemed to send rays of light all over the upper part of the cave. The same red glow shone also on the wild figures of the two men; the one dark and swart as an Indian, more than six feet high, and brawny in proportion; the other broad-shouldered, and short, with small evil grey eyes, a mat of coarse curled hair, and an enormous beard falling down on his vast chest. They moved about the fire, now stripped to the waist, collecting tools and utensils, forming a singular contrast to the lithe, delicate form of the boy, whose dark gray eyes and clear pale face were lit up every now and then with a wild smile, that flickered with a transient gleam, and then faded into an expression of the deepest and most pathetic sadness, as he crooned to himself, in a sweet, rich, boyish alto, a verse or two of an old Irish melody.

And there lay Brooker, all unconscious of the magnificent picture, and forming himself but a sorry part of it, like a swathed mummy, on the floor. He was also, to his infinite vexation, too

far off, and too much muffled by his bandages, to catch the conversation that went on round the furnace. The only thing that he distinctly made out by the sounds and smells was, that he was an unwilling spectator of illicit distilling, as it is so frequently carried on even yet in the mountain-districts of the west of Ireland. Though he strained every nerve, he could not make out more than a chance word or oath,—with which the discourse was more seasoned than needful; but the voices and ways of the men were entirely strange to him.

“Musha, then, Murty, what’ll we do wid him, now he’s on hand?”

“*Thonam an diaoul!* sell him for old iron, may be!”

“But I’m in earnest, I say. I’ll never go shares wid letting out our nate little secret here. No man who isn’t friends goes out but with his heels foremost, in a convanient wooden house!”

“I see no good in that,” replied Dennis. “What’s the use of reddening our hands more nor they are, Murty?”

“Diaoul! you’re a white heart, Dennis! You’ll red your hand onst, to get your neck into the halter, and then shrink back from what’ll get ye out on’t again. That’s not my politics, a whirra! I’ll be safe on some side, any way; and so shall you, in spite o’ yourself.”

“Shaun Daragh was on the safe side,” said the boy, leaning on the bellows, and as if speaking to himself. “He made sure of his game; but he has often told me he has to scorch for it now.”

“Bad luck to yez, ye imp!” cried Murty, turn-

ing round on him savagely. "Blow the bellows, or I'll tache ye manners!"

"Is it manners ye'll teach, not knowing any?" replied the boy, with his flickering smile. "Nay, nay, Murty, I'm not afraid of you while Dennis is here to stand by me. I love Dennis in his way,—though he's no beauty either; but you are as black as the Duigan Pool; and ye'll come to Shaun Daragh's end. He often talks to me about you."

"Whisht, whisht, Shamus, alanna!" said Dennis; "Don't vex and worrit so much about old Shaun. See, acushla,—see how the bonny blaze is lightin' up the old altar of the Virgin,—that I should name her blissid name!"

He pointed to a huge slab of limestone, which, either by the natural action of the water occasionally dripping from the walls, or by the tools of fugitives under the cruel persecutions of an earlier time, had been smoothed and fashioned into a kind of table altar, beneath which a stone recumbent figure seemed to lie, exactly as the effigies of saints are seen in so many Continental churches. The back, or what might fancifully represent the reredos of the altar, was thickly set with crystals, from which the light now flashing made it look like a shield of diamonds.

The boy's eyes kindled with enthusiastic delight.

"Och! then, sure 'tis a blessed feast-night up in Heaven above! I never saw the dear blessed Mother's altar look like that, or it was not. An' hark to them—the angels singing up above! We'll sing too, by God's blessing, to keep them company." And rocking himself backwards and

forwards, as he threw himself on his knees, Shamus began to sing, in a soft, subdued voice, amazingly rich and sweet, to an old pathetic tune :

" Through Erin's Isle, long since, the Queen of Heaven went
To seek one faithful heart.
The cord and 'triangle' had swept her plains all clean
With persecution's smart
She found the red-stained grave of many a loving child
(Oh ! bleed my heart !)
By soldiers trodden, and by ruffians rudely scorned
In street and mart !
She found their names forgotten, and their memories cold ;
Then Mary said :
' Dear martyred children for old Erin's glorious faith,
Your names from earth have fled ;
But you, in shining bands, with crown and deathless palm,
Shall golden pavements tread.
Old Erin's lot shall be to suffer now awhile,
Then, risen from the dead,
Shall hear the Judge's welcome, see His glorious smile ;—
So Mary said."

Then knocking his breast, the tears poured down his cheeks, and he sobbed aloud, till the mood rapidly passed away, and he returned with redoubled energy to his bellows and the furnace-fire.

The two distillers did not seem in the least surprised or put out by any of these proceedings. They went on with their work, watching the heat, covering up the vessels in use, and finally, when they saw that the moment had come, making the necessary changes in the arrangement of the brew. During a pause after one of these silent changes, the dark one, who was always addressed as Dennis, took some food and spirits from a bag in a recess, and spreading them before Brooker, ordered Shamus to feed him and give him drink, and to be careful how he did it. While this was going on, he and his companion took theirs by hasty

snatches, with long pulls at the whiskey-flask, while they watched what seemed to them a critical moment in the process of distillation. Just as they were both engaged at the furnace, and had bidden Shamus be "as whisht as a fish floating on the water," a long low whistle was heard, as if above their heads.

"*Diaoul!*" was Murty's muffled exclamation.

They both became motionless, and perfectly silent.

The whistle was repeated, followed by a wild cry, like that of the bittern when soaring above its brood.

"We're tracked, as sure as blazes!" whispered Murty. "That's Jim Rooney's call."

Dennis only answered by indicating Brooker with his thumb, to remind his companion not to utter a word that could betray any one else. He then beckoned Shamus from the furnace, and after a short whispered direction sent him on some errand. The boy seemed perfectly to understand what to do, and disappeared with noiseless steps through a different part of the cave to the usual entrance.

Murty's attention at that moment of suspense was attracted by Brooker, who slowly raised his head, and worked it to and fro against the wall, to loosen the bandage which bound his eyes.

In an instant the distiller was beside him, pressing his hand with a murderous grasp upon his throat. "Arrah! ye black prachin' villain, ye'll do for us, will you?" he said, in a hoarse whisper. "Take care ye don't do for yourself, my fine fellow! Will you be quiet now? If ye lift up one

hair, I'll squeeze the breath out of ye as aisy as I'd squeeze a lemon!"

He took off his hand, and as the unfortunate Scripture-reader lay motionless and nearly stifled, Murty knelt beside him, watchful and still as a hyena beside his prey.

They remained so, till the lightest possible foot-fall broke the stillness, and Shamus darted through the archway by which he had disappeared, his face mysterious and excited, and his eyes lit with a mixed expression of exultation and fear. He came close up to Dennis, and said,

"The police are drawn out on Cahir-naduigan, ayont the two peaks; and the gauger, Sheehan, is with them, vowing he'll have the bodies of Dennis Malone and Murty Coolin, dead or alive! He has found the still over at Ballinadhu, and knows that the *Saucy Kate* got away from the quay full of kegs. He is ravin' and swearin' like mad! But the police have got warrants, Jim says, for much worse things."

"Warrants! What did Jim Rooney say?" said Murty, whom the news had turned of an ashy white.

"Come, Shamus, alanna, out wid all yer owl's budget at onst."

"Jim does not know what the warrants are," said Shamus, turning his large, dewy, flickering eyes on Murty with a doubtful expression. "He *jwhispered* me that they was for a hanging matter, and looked as black as a coal over it. He said something about one coming back from over the seas; but I could not rightly make it out. But sure enough 'tis Sir Philip Ffrench has made out the

warrants, and a grand Government man has been down to Sir Philip's about it. Who is it, then, Murty, that com' back from over the seas?"

With a frightful imprecation Murty raised his hand to fell the boy to the earth ; but his arm was seized by Malone.

"*Bodagh!*" he exclaimed, in a deep whisper, " touch a hair of the gossoon's head, and our bargain is up ! What does it matter what the innocent asks ? He knows nothing, or less. Where is Jim *ma bouchal* ?"

" Watchin' the turf burnin', just as he always does when you are brewn'," replied Shamus, his eye wandering again to Murty. " He looked so natural-like when they seized him to ask the questions, and said such funny things, that no one could ever have thought he knew a stick of the business down here. They asked him if there weren't a secret cave where whiskey was distilled somewhere on the coast ; and he ses, ' Yes,' ses he ; ' there are two of 'em down at the quay of Bally-malin.' "

" Hooroo ! then that was fine !" exclaimed Dennis, laughing ; and even Murty recovered from his passion, and entered into the joke.

Looking at the three faces at that moment, so keenly and richly alive with mirthful wit, could any one have imagined that death, or deadly risk, or fatal crime, had ever come near, or been realised by any one of them ? It is precisely this rapid, impulsive transition, swayed by the passing feeling of the hour, which, as it creates the poetry, the interest, and charm of their character, opens the door to the chief dangers of our Irish countrymen.

They are and must always be judged as of a southern race and instincts.

"Well, now," whispered Dennis, after his interlude of fun, "what is the next steps us be to take? First and foremost, and no thanks to them for it, the brew is done, and we can put down the fire and bury the worm and still; let alone the stuff, which I hope will never wet any of their lips till they're dry in the grave!"

"I wish 'em blistered first," replied Murty, viciously. "If it wern't for that eavesdropping rascal yonder, we could make our way out by Lanty Hoolahan's Passage, and do 'em all up by comin' out on the shore!"

"True for ye, Murty; you're a reg'lar trump! I never thought of the passage. Do you think it is open now?"

"Shamus can tell you the best o' that," replied Murty. "Here, boy, have you been lately by Hoolahan's Passage?"

"Yes," replied Shamus; "but you mustn't ga there to carry that loon," pointing to Brooker; "for he's too sharp to be trusted even blindfolded. I see him prickin' up his ears at every sound, and pretty long ones they are."

"Dennis," said Murty, "what'll be to be done wid him? You blunderin' loon, why didn't you fling him over into the Pool, instead of draggin' him in here to blether about the cave. *Thonam an diaoul!* Now there's warrants out, I'll not let him escape to help on the hounds."

"There's been blood enough," replied Dennis, doggedly. "Do all the rest of the murderin' your-self."

"There's the other way," said Murty; and his evil eyes turned on the furnace with an expression that seemed to extinguish hope. "Drop him in there, Dennis, *acushla*; he'll tell no tales after!"

"Murty, you're your own master; but if there is a devil, he's bought you body and soul," replied Dennis. "I'll not leave him wid you. Here, Shamus, *ma bouchal*, who always helps me in need," (here he whispered to the lad very low;) "you shall take the prachin' varmint on old Neill's rapparee-pony Barney. His hands will be tied, *alanna*, and his eyes and mouth stoppered; for divil a hair of your head shall he harm. Lead him round and round, till he comes to the other end of the ridge, where, I believe, he was going back into Peters-town. Then ye can make the pony lie down, as ye know how, and shove him aisly off by the roadside. There's many a passin' that way, and they'll find the precious Prodestan' and take him home. And then ye mount and gallop Barney by the back road to the shore, and ye'll find us under the cliff, *where ye knows on.*"

Shamus seemed to take in the idea with the quickness of lightning. Brooker was carried by Dennis through the long and winding ways of another of the numerous outlets of the cave, and firmly fastened, gagged, and bound upon a stout rough pony, whose stable was in that portion of the rambling excavations. Shamus then mounted behind, and the gallant little "rapparee," whose feet were unshod, soon carried them swiftly and quietly out of sight.

In a few minutes the last remains of the furnace

were quenched, the vestiges of the distilling operation carefully buried ; and the two accomplices in the act, after looking at the priming of the pistols which they carried, disappeared through the narrow archway by which Shamus had first been despatched.

CHAPTER X.

"Patience, accomplish thy labour, accomplish thy work of affection,
Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is godlike."
Longfellow.

A great deal of business had been achieved on that eventful evening. Among the rest, Father Fitzsimon had seen Una, and had heard with great satisfaction all she had to say, inwardly much marvelling at the treasures of clear sound judgment, bright gifts, and childlike innocence and purity of heart contained in that one poor girl. In a few minutes, despite his rather awful presence and unaccustomed "exactness," she was thoroughly at home with him ; and with her own delightful frankness and perfect modesty made him acquainted with the whole case, with all that had taken place, and with Molina and herself. Father Fitzsimon questioned sharply and acutely, and he could not make out but that Molina had been treated with uniform harshness and injustice.

Having satisfied his own mind, he sent for

Randal, and after speaking to him for a while, bound him by a solemn promise never to lay hands on the Scripture-reader again, whatever might be the provocation, or even if his own life were attacked. On this condition alone would he give his aid towards obtaining their immediate marriage, or mediate with Lord Peterstown.

Lastly, and this was now late in the evening, he sent for old Macnamara, begging it as a particular favour to himself, because he wished to see him alone, and gave him a solemn and affectionate charge to watch over Molina, and to warn him gently and kindly when he saw him likely to be chafed.

This ended the evening's labour to all outward eyes; but the angels, who looked down that night, gathering up joy or sorrow for their eternal home, would note that for an hour or two after midnight the shepherd was still watching, and that prayer and penance by turns pleaded for the flock, only temporarily given into his charge, before the throne of God. The next morning, having said Mass for the same intention, Father Fitzsimon called on Mr. Hall, and spent some time in representing to him the unnecessary aggravation of the Scripture reader's conduct, and the ill-blood which he had made by his own fault. He begged him to put some bounds to Brooker's zeal, and to exercise that influence which an educated man and a gentleman *must* always possess, to divert the painful collisions between him and the Catholic peasants on the estate. He spoke so sensibly, so moderately, and at the same time so entirely without fear, making the justice of his plea so evident, that

Exeter Hall felt some shame and much surprise. He promised that Brooker should never again, under any pretext, enter the Catholic schools uninvited, and made an apology for his having done so at all. He, on his part, asked that Molina should make some amends for the public chastisement inflicted on a person having some authority under him, which Father Fitzsimon promised to bring about. Exeter Hall was actually seen, very soon after, shaking hands with this dangerous inquisitor. But then, as the "Anti-Mark-of-the-Beast" Society could have told him, they all practise magnetism to fascinate people by their manners!

This much having been arranged, the dangerous priest turned his steps towards the schoolhouse. This was a refreshing scene to him, and he felt its happy influence. The hum of the classes came through the garlanded windows like music to his ear. Within these four walls the weary world of discord and division was shut out, and for the hour there was a paradise of rest. At the sight of the Father all the little faces brightened into a glow of delight. Una looked up from her roll-book, and came forward with a hearty and special welcome. She seemed to look upon him already as a real old friend. There was a short talk with her, and for the children a short catechetical instruction, and a little story that made the school ring with peals of the merriest laughter; and then the priest left the school-house, and bent his way to the Duncarra Road, which he followed for about a mile, as it wound along the rugged shore of the glorious lake, now glittering and beaming

in the morning sunshine. Every now and then Father Fitzsimon glanced at it, and at the exquisite sky line of the purple range beyond, and the far off sparkle of the Atlantic in the horizon ; but other thoughts and other views possessed his mind. I think he wanted a little more refreshing. Perhaps he thought so himself ; for he did not stop till he came in sight of the many roofs and turrets of Duncarra Abbey, which rose just as an abbey should, from a green rounded knoll, jutting into the clear waters of the lake. It was a Cistercian abbey of the mitigated rule ; and when Father Fitzsimon rang the bell, the wicket, and after a previous observation, the gate, was opened by a monk in the "stainless wool" of the great St. Bernard, the last of the fathers, whose austere but peaceful armies had peopled so many wastes, even before the Middle Ages had filled the world with friars "black and grey."

The monk smiled and bowed when he saw Father Fitzsimon.

" You will be wanting Father Lawrence, sir ; I will call him in out of the garden."

" May I not go to him in the garden ? I should be sorry to bring him in."

The monk readily agreed, observing that Father Lawrence had been very ailing of late, and the infirmarian had ordered him to be as much as possible in the open air. He led the way through the hall and cloisters in silence, the coloured shadows from the window falling on him as he glided noiselessly along with bowed head, making him look like a shadow too, flitting between real and unreal worlds.

At the end of the third side of the quadrangle the open door showed the garden, glowing like a rich jewel, through the deeply carved archway.

"I will leave you here, sir," said the porter, bowing his meek head to the priest; "you will find Father Lawrence in one of the walks, and you can let yourself out when you are ready to go."

Father Fitzsimon passed the beds, glowing with the flowers of a late autumn, set round a quaint moss-grown dial, and turned into a long walk, bordered with thickest hedges of close-cut yew, which at intervals opened into recesses, each marked by a cross and some implement of the Passion, and forming arbours of impenetrable shade. In one of these, like a patch of unmelted snow, sat a monk intently reading, before whom Father Fitzsimon stopped, looking as if he had found the refreshment that he needed. The monk looked up at him, smiled a little, and held out his hand. Then moving to one side, he made room for the priest to sit beside him, and looking at him again, said,

"Can you practise this lesson yet? Sit down and be instructed a little, before you disturb our ears with your worldly coils."

Father Fitzsimon sat down as quietly as the other commanded. He looked rested, and satisfied to stay there altogether, if the other was so minded. The monk gave him one more look, very earnest and sweet, and then shading his calm face with one white frail hand, turned over several leaves with the other. So do the blessed look in Angelico's pictures, when they stand, or play musi-

real instruments, with unspeakable joy beholding the Beatific Vision.

"We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we mind not our own defects. We would have others strictly corrected, but we are not willing to be corrected ourselves.....If all were perfect, what then should we have to suffer for others for God's sake? But now, God has so disposed things that we may learn to bear one another's burdens. For there is no man without defect, no man without his burden; no man sufficient for himself; but we must support one another, comfort one another, assist, instruct, admonish one another."

"Are you admonished, Cyprian?"

"Yes. What I came for, however, was rather to be comforted. I am willing to own that the admonition is not a bad fit."

"That deserves some comfort," said the monk, smiling a little in his peculiar sweet way. "What is crooked—you or the outside world? I think, now I look at you, there is not much that is crooked within."

"Thank you; I cannot say as much for the outside."

"More discord? You have certainly fallen upon a stony vineyard. You ought to look upon it as a signal favour from God."

"There is discord of the worst kind. You know Father Murphy so well, that you must be pretty well at home in Peterstown affairs. The Scripture reader has fallen foul of a fine young fellow—a Catholic of course—engaged to marry the schoolmistress."

"Una Macnamara ! I remember the dear little girl well. She came here to see me after her first Communion, and then joined the sodality in this church, with Father Murphy's leave. Good little Una ! I did think, when I looked at her that she was born for higher things. Well ! there is no higher than to do God's will."

"I agree with you. I think Una is far out of the common way ; one of a thousand. What the end will be, of course God only knows. At present there is the engagement, and according to the circumstances, the sooner they are married the better. The agent has given the poor young man notice to quit, it appears ; very unjustly, and to get rid of him. Brooker comes across him continually, one way or another. I have bound him over by a solemn promise to keep the peace for the present ; but that cannot last. Lawrence, you know how earnestly I have prayed to do the work I was sent here for ; how anxious the bishop is that peace should be made in this village. And what can I do unless I offer my soul for his ? If he should break out, and be lost, after all."

"He will not, Cyprian ; he will not," replied the monk, who had been listening with face intent and with joined hands, while the priest spoke. "I know of whom you speak ; he may be fearfully tried, he may go through cruel sufferings, he may lose all the happiness that life seems now to offer him ; life itself may be cut short in its prime ; but that soul will not be lost. It has been too constantly offered, it is itself too much devoted to our Blessed Lady of Sorrows, to be finally overcome. But, oh, how long, O Lord, how long wilt

Thou have patience with what is done in this land ? How long are we to groan and travail under a yoke of irresponsible oppression ? It is our own sins, the sins of Irishmen in other lands, which perpetuate this evil. It is the drunkenness, the murders, the sacrileges, the impurity, which we hear of, like a hideous dream, but which, thanks for ever be to God ! our eyes never behold in this country, which cling to us here, and oblige Him to lay upon us a heavy chastising hand. You tell me things of our people in London which haunt me even in my prayers. I can but prostrate myself upon the stones, and cry out, ‘ O Lord, have mercy upon this people, wandering from Thee ; have mercy upon us poor sinners ! ’ If what you say of them in England is true, our poor countrymen offend God more in one week there than they would in a lifetime at home. God help them ! I can reach them only with my prayers. But most surely He will afflict the country which gave birth to those Catholics who mock Him and make a scandal of their faith. Let us at least suffer and do penance. For Moses’ sake the Lord spared the idolatrous Israelites ; let us cry without ceasing that our countrymen may be changed, and cease to insult Him when they leave their homes. *Exurgat Deus, et miserebitur Sion !*—‘ Let God arise, and have mercy upon Sion ! ’ ”

“ Yes,” said Father Fitzsimon, after a short pause—“ yes ; we cannot keep too much in sight our own faults and shortcomings. Still, I return to the clear fact, that it is simply amazing that the religious arrangements of Ireland do not strike

every rational man as the merest absurdity ; an absurdity which is so gross that it can only be mischievous. At every turn the press cries out and declaims against declaimers, asserting that there is nothing more to complain of, and that Ireland gets the lion's share of every good thing. We are told of sales of property, of bog-land reclaimed, of works and of improved farming. We ask for bread and they give us a stone."

" Because they think the stone the best of the two," replied Father Lawrence. " Happily for themselves, but unhappily for the modern idea, our countrymen do not think well-being and bodily comforts everything. If an Irishman is good, he asks for religion, the true religion, the old Faith, before all other things. He cannot live without the altar, the sacraments, and the priest. This material life does not hem him in, and blind his view. He has distinct views into the next world, and faith to realise and keep it continually before him. He *must* either live by faith, or sink into a beast."

" Perfectly true," said the priest ; " and that is why the absurdity of the Establishment weighs most heavily upon a people like ours. As to the thing itself, it is such a gross imposition upon the good sense of Europe, that unless the Government were afraid to raise the hornets about their ears with the dread of restitution, it could not go down a month longer. A richly endowed church for the handful ; bishops with £10,000. or £12,000. per annum for flocks of a few hundred souls ; rectors and chaplains with large livings, but no souls ; Scripture readers, and schools, and

missionaries, without parishes or flocks to be guided or taught—must of necessity bring about exactly the state of things at Peterstown. They must proselytise, seduce, tamper, and play underhand parts. They are forced into wrangling, disputes, enmity, and bad blood. What other alternative have they but to study photography, or go to sleep.

"If any such innocent amusements could be found for only the ladies of their families, it would be a blessing," he added.

"Poor Cyprian!" exclaimed the monk, smiling a little, as he glanced at the rugged, satirical face beside him. "There I pity you indeed. The absentee landlords, and the whole bevy of bishops, parsons, and their assistant staff, would, indeed, be harmless compared with their feminine adjectives."

"Yes," almost groaned the priest, "when St. Patrick carried off the toads and vipers, he evidently forgot to include the devout sex! Well, what I want now to propose to your consideration is this. I think of hastening the marriage of Molina and the young schoolmistress; and as I have full powers, both from the Bishop and Father Murphy, to do the best possible in all difficult cases, I think school matters must give way to the furtherance of peace and union; therefore, I need not wait to communicate with the parish priest. As soon as they are married, I want to remove them—for a little while at least—from the village. Could your procurator find any employment for the young man here; and would there be any place for them to put their heads in?"

Father Lawrence thought a little while.

"I think Father Joseph was speaking to the procurator, a while since, about an under miller. Do you think Molina has any capacity that way?"

"I believe he has a capacity up to most things. He is a fine young fellow; intelligent, careful, and very strong. Perhaps he could come up and speak to the procurator himself?"

"I believe that would be the best; but I will speak to Father Joseph first, and I will let you know. I am not at all employed in the administrative departments, so I cannot answer for any thing. But I will see Father Joseph, and explain the case. I am sure he will do what he can."

"It will be a great act of charity. But, Lawrence, don't think me insatiable; I want you to add something to it."

The monk shaded his eyes with his hand for a few moments. Then he said:

"I have leave now, being very idle and useless, to use more penances. I will offer them up for this end; but on one condition only."

"Name it."

"That you use no more penances than usual during the time."

"And wherefore not, if it please your reverence?"

"First, because I say so," replied the monk, looking up; "secondly, because the care of souls at this moment is very anxious and wearing work. There is a 'thirdly,' but it is not necessary to mention it just now."

"This is nonsense, Lawrence; and I do not think I can give you any such promise."

The monk was at that moment resting one elbow on his knees, and looking fixedly at the ground. When he heard the last remark, he glanced up suddenly at the priest, who had got up from the bench, and was standing before him. Then he said, in a marked way :

"Cyprian, are you going to do *all* the work to-day?"

Whether it was the magnetic effect of that soft, keen blue eye, or that some chord of childish association was touched, Father Fitzsimon's dark thoughtful face immediately relaxed. He threw back a laughing, understanding look at the monk, and replied :

"Have it your own way, as you always had, and always will have!"

For the first time, then, a stranger standing by would have been forced to the conviction,—contradicting, even while asserting itself to the mind,—that those two were brothers.

Yes ; the dark powerfully-built priest, with his strongly marked features, and the frail, fair, and slender monk, were not only brothers, but twin brothers. They were born into the world the same hour, and rolled and crowded on the same green turf, sat side by side on the same school-bench, were inseparable friends and companions at the same college, and were ordained priests on the same day. But for a very short time only did Lawrence Fitzsimon remain a parish-priest, bearing single-handed the weight and wear of the care of souls. His ardent thirst for a more spiritual and

interior life, and desire for the practice of evangelical counsels, with the love he had always secretly cherished and hidden for a contemplative life and continual prayer, soon overpowered all other considerations, and in spite of the first strong repugnance of the bishop, who well knew his value, he gave his consent to his making a trial of religious life. He made his offer of himself to the Prior of Duncarra, and soon after entered the novitiate. It was not very long before he was placed in charge of the chief spiritual affairs of the abbey, where he was sought and consulted far and wide by the sorrowful, the troubled, and the perplexed.

It was no wonder they consulted him. Men said that when they approached him, even in the confessional, or when he came into the guest-room, they felt strengthened and consoled. There was something in his pale but sunny face, the grave sweetness of his clear eyes, and the smile that seemed to shine through the whole face from within,—the childlike simpleness, the angelic pureness, of that character,—which attracted all hearts, but drew them never for one instant to itself. Deeply as he was loved, exceedingly as he was sought, it was a love full of reverence, divested of the familiarity and corroding influence of general attachments. Men and women, children and girls, bishops and nobles, alike loved and sought him, as if he had been some guardian angel, who, while guarding or rescuing them from evil, stood at the same time himself constantly in the presence of God.

And so it came about that Father Fitzsimon *felt* like others, and did the same. Whenever it

was possible, when a heavier load than usual pressed upon him, when darker perplexities gathered round, when, while enlightening, consoling, and courageously leading others forward into the battle of life, his own soul was sending up such a loud and bitter cry to Heaven as Moses sent up from the Red Sea shore—then, as to-day, he found or made some errand to Duncarra Abbey, and talked with Father Lawrence awhile. The remedy was simple, but it never failed.

And now he is about to go back to his work. The time which was usually, by tacit consent, allotted to these wholesome interviews, had sped, and the indulgence was never permitted to be abused. He held out his hand.

"Good by, Lawrence : remember that I need your prayers, and reckon upon them. Let me know about Molina."

"Stay a minute. You look as if you had not had quite enough of my medicine. I will give you a homœopathic dose to take home. Draw a sentence yourself from my old master."

With the simple earnestness of a child, the monk held the old volume to his brother, bidding him make the sign of the cross on it, and open at the place. He then took the book back and read :

"Son, be not dismayed with the labours which thou hast undertaken for me, neither let the tribulations which befall thee quite cast thee down ; but let my promises strengthen thee and comfort thee in all events. I am sufficient to reward thee beyond all measure.... Mind what thou art doing ; labour faithfully in My vineyard ; I will be thy

reward.....Peace shall come in one day which is known to the Lord ; and it shall not be a change of day and night, such as it is at present, but everlasting light, infinite brightness, steadfast peace, and secure rest.

"It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God. Lift up, therefore, thy face to heaven.

"Behold, I and all My saints with Me, who in this world have had a great conflict, do now rejoice, are comforted now, are now safe, are now at rest, and they shall for all eternity abide with Me in the kingdom of My Father."

The low, thin voice ceased. The words of that old, time-worn, but imperishable poem, (the true epic of spiritual life) more noble, more solemn, more healing, than ever fell from any pen but that of Holy Writ, seemed to float on the deep stillness, and with austere sweetness to lift the veil from all earthly things. Father Fitzsimon stood for a few minutes, as if taking in the whole scene. The high impenetrable walls of yew, the moss-grown dial in its jewelled flower-knot, marking none but the cloudless hours,* the ivy-grown turrets of the abbey, the white habit and fragile peaceful figure of the monk, still rapt in the words which he had just ceased to utter. These things he noted, and seemed to lay by, while his lips moved for an instant in prayer.

Then the brothers clasped one another by the hand, and the soldier of Christ left the heights

* " Non numero horas, nisi serenas."

where it was good to tarry for a while, and went down again to his work in the plain.

CHAPTER XI.

"The secret mischiefs that I set abroach,
I lay unto the grievous charge of others."
Richard III.

The morning after Moylan had been at Powder-house Court he received a note, strangely written and more strangely spelt, which called him up very early. When I say that, I mean between three and four o'clock in the morning, when the three-quarter moon and the stars were still having all the night to themselves. The note was brought and left by a young boy.

Moylan was very soon dressed, and ready to start. Before he left his room he unlocked an old brass-bound bureau, and took from it a pair of pistols. Good three barrelled revolvers they were, and very well loaded. He looked carefully to the charge and caps, and put a barrel of each on the half-cock. They were then carefully stowed in a deep side-pocket of his overcoat, ready to hand. The overcoat had a high, stiff collar, which he pulled over the lower part of his face, and a slouched wideawake completely shaded the upper. He softly let himself out by a side-door of the house, and went to the stables. There he found the key, which seemed to be always kept in a

hiding-place known to him, and soon roused and brought out a stout galloway, which he saddled and bridled in a few minutes. He locked the stable-door, replaced the key in its nook, mounted the willing little pony, and set off at a round trot. He took a back way in a westerly direction, and before very long the steep hollows and rugged banks subsided into more level ground, and then the road suddenly descended into a ravine, commonly called a *boreen*, bounded on each side by high banks of bare rock, scantily strewed with moss and mountain herbage. After Moylan had followed this track for about half an hour, the hollow sound of the waves was heard booming on the rocky shore, and whiffs of sea-air and salt were distinctly manifest.

The agent then reined up his trusty cob, and dismounting, led him carefully along the rough and broken pathway between the rocks, until he came to a kind of shelter scooped out of the high bank, which might in some emergency have been used as a stable, for a rough boarding seemed to do duty for a manger, and two or three hooks were driven into the back of it. Then Moylan securely fastened the cob with a halter he had brought with him, and when he had done this, he went forward on foot, winding in and out of the rocks to the left of the main road like one who seemed perfectly at home in the mazes of the cliffs and shore.

After making several sharp turns, and clambering more than once over the rocky barriers and down again into a fresh gully, Moylan suddenly came in sight of two men lying under an enormous overhanging rock, smoking, and apparently

half asleep. This sleep, however, was changed into the most wide-awake capability as soon as they heard the tread of the agent's boot upon the rocky ground. One of them seized a revolver. "*Aisth!*" exclaimed the other; "Murty, 'tis his honour the gentleman!" Both the men, however, got up, and seemed to stand on their guard. The one who had spoken first, who was no other than Dennis Malone, remarked that it was wonderful early, and he did not think his honour would descend to be out of his bed like that.

"Now, once for all, you may as well stop that blarney," haughtily and curtly replied the agent. "I know you, and I know my own affairs, and I come for what I want."

Dennis did not seem at all disconcerted by the agent's want of courtesy. Indeed he gave a knowing wink to Murty, who had sat down again to enjoy his pipe, and then settled his face into the most charming expression of stolid innocence and humility.

Moylan saw the action, and for the first time keenly fixed his steely eyes upon the object of it. As he did so, he slowly raised his iron-shod life-preserver, and, pointing at Murty, said :

"How long has Murty Coolin been returned from his travels to foreign parts?"

The two men stared wildly at him and at one another, and Murty, in spite of every effort, grew white with rage and fear. He seemed not to know whether to seize on some weapon close to his hand, and murder the agent at once, or to fly the place himself.

Moylan's lip curled with its habitual sneer as he read the inward movement.

"I advise you not to try *that*," he said; "it would not succeed or forward your plans in any way. I am fully on my guard, and better armed than you. Indeed, but one movement, and you are dead men." His three-barrelled revolver glittered at the same instant in his hand. "Besides," he added, "I did not come here with bad intentions; and both of you, if you behave well and do as I bid you, can do a good service, and get a handsome reward."

A rapid change took place in both faces. The thought of murder, engendered by fear and mistrust, quickly vanished; and the thirst of gain, mixed with sharp curiosity, and a kind of eager, desperado fidelity, succeeded. With deep oaths and frightful curses they invoked all kinds of hideous imprecations on themselves, if they would not serve his honour through fire, water, and blood.

These shocking words had very little effect on Moylan. He rather smiled with pleasure when he heard them, scorning and hating, as he did, the Sacred Mysteries which they profaned; but his one test of their sincerity was his own eye, and his knowledge of the human heart when soiled and stamped with crime. He looked at them, calculated upon their daily lives, and trusted them for the time as useful tools.

He turned over a convenient fragment of rock, and asked for a cup of "the stuff" which was standing beside the men in its little keg. Well *he knew*, though he said nothing, that it was

illicit whiskey, made for the *shebeen* houses of the township and district. Some driftwood from the wreck of a noble ship, cast away, as hundreds were on that coast, against the fearful rocks of Finan's Coffin, was feeding a brisk little fire, on which a skillet of water was boiling. Moylan coolly mixed himself a stiff *quaigh* of the smoky liquid, and took a thick barley cake from his pocket.

"Now," he said, after despatching this very early breakfast with his habitual coolness—"now you know very well that both your liberties are in my hands. You, Coolin, are liable at any moment to re-transportation, and the whole term of your punishment to begin over again. And you, Malone, are open to the law for illicit distilling, and *for sundry other little matters known to ourselves*. Let us understand one another at once, as it will save time. Are you willing to do me and justice a service?"

"Anything in reason—whatever your honour would point out."

"Do you know young Molina of Peterstown?"

"Do I know him?" exclaimed Malone, with a shower of curses in Irish. "Is it not he that threw me in the ring at Ballina, and robbed me by the same token of ten goulden sovereigns? An' hasn't he broke my head too at the Cahir-na-more *pattern*, where I was first till he came, the spaldeen, thinking himself above all others, then he was! An' didn't he rob me too of the purty little schoolmistress and all—going to marry her as he was—and get the best of everything in the place?"

Then followed sundry blessings. Moylan pricked up his ears with delight. The choicest melody could not have been so sweet to him as the hearty sound of these good wishes. Here was an instrument tuned to his hands. He looked at the swarthy giant with almost affectionate approval; but he carefully commanded his face, as usual.

"I thought you might know him," he replied carelessly. "Well, I want him *watched*. He is a quarrelsome, cock-a-me-hoop fellow, always getting in other folks' way, and, as you say, thinking himself first chop in everything. I believe he has threatened one or two, and I want him followed and watched closely. Then, as to the girl," he quietly added, marking the effect of his words one by one—"as to the girl, she is a pretty creature indeed. I don't wonder at your taste, Malone. I do wonder it never occurred to you to carry her off and get married in some quiet corner."

"*Thonam an diaoul!*" muttered Dennis to himself; "you're the devil himself, I do believe!" But his face glowed at the idea. "I'd have done it long since," he exclaimed, "but for one thing."

"What thing could have been strong enough to hinder your getting yourself such a nice little wife?"

Murty laughed through his red beard. "Dennis has the soft spot in his heart, sir, yet: it's the fear of the priest!"

"The priest!" echoed Moylan, with a bitter sneer of contempt and disappointment. "Well, you're about the last customers I should have expected for him. I wish him joy of two such jewels

to his share ! Well, that does beat Bannagher, if you are in earnest!"

"Sir," said Malone, leaning, against the rock and fixing his great dark eyes on Moylan with an expression that even he felt to his back-bone—"sir, you may say I've no need to speak of a priest, seeing I haven't kneeled to one for thirteen years, nor crossed the threshold of one since I left them for reasons of my own, and could not have spoken to one without giving up my purpose ; but I *know*, sir, that the blessing follows them that keeps close by the priest, and the curse follows them as goes from him; and a double and a treble curse lights upon them that lifts up a hand to harm one of them, even so much as a hair of his head. I have my religion, sir,—the old religion of the country ; and whatever I do and wherever I wander before I die, I hope never to blast my soul altogether by forsaking what I have been taught!"

"As you please," replied Moylan, out of whose face the sarcasm seemed to have died.

There was a pause : a moment of conviction was working on his heart ; a moment of grace on that of Murty Coolin. Both were resolutely resisted and dashed aside. Men write of the moments in which the fate of empires is decided, when they go forward to victory and centuries of rule, or downward to the crash of their doom ; they talk of the flow and ebb of fortune or success in life, by seizing or passing by the opportunity that is given ; but, oh, how few are there who mark and note the diamond sands of those moments of grace which are sent to pour light and strength into the torpid or struggling soul ! What are the failures

or success of the dream of life, or the crash of all the empires of the world, weighed with the loss or victory of one immortal soul ?

Moylan despised *his* moment, and it went by. He knocked the ashes from his cigar, and said coolly, " Well, does it come within your articles of faith to watch Molina or not ? "

" Ay, no fear ; I'll watch him fast enough ! " replied Dennis, who had subsided from his flash of faith into his ordinary mood.

Moylan pulled out some sovereigns, and gave him two of them.

" You will wear out some shoe leather, I promise you, and will have to buy a decent suit of clothes, —perhaps even to appear like a gentleman rather later, for which I will find the means. You will remember, Malone, and Coolin here is a witness to my words, *there is to be no violence*"—and he fixed his eyes sternly on the man—" unless Molina takes to fighting you seriously. But you are on no account to *attack him*. If he puts himself in harm's way, of course I cannot help it ; and if you break his head for good and all in defending your own life, it is only what any man in his senses must do in the same case. But what I want is that he should be watched, and that you report to me—"

He stopped suddenly, for a scream like that of the curlew on the wing, thrilled through the air, and seemed just above their heads.

" Confound this place ! " he exclaimed pettishly, " there is no quiet from the sea birds ! Can there be any one near, disturbing them ? "

" Not likely, sir," replied Murty, who here gave

Dennis an imperceptible sign ; "but if you've made an end with Malone, he may as well go out and be on guard till you've finished off with us altogether."

Moylan assented, and Malone clambered up the steep bank, and disappeared. There was a moment's pause, during which Murty furtively glanced every now and then through his red shock of hair at the agent, while he puffed away ostentatiously at his pipe.

"Coolin," said Moylan, "I am afraid Malone is a bit of a *softie*, as they say in Lancashire. I think you've more pluck and marrow in you."

"Och, *wirrastru*, sir ; you're only a flatterin' a poor fellow to say so ! Malone is a strong man." (Then within his own mind,) "What does the double devil want of me now ? I'll have it out, sure !"

"Well, about that girl, now ; wasn't he soft, when he really seems to care about her ? Why, girls are carried off every day and married, you know, all right. Of course I mean that. What harm does it do ? She gets a husband, you know, and that is what girls mostly care for."

"It's true as gospel, sir." (Within.) "Now, is that all that he wants ?"

"Coolin, your life is not a very pleasant one in Ireland, skulking about like a wild beast in the mountains. How should you like to go to America, and settle down there, with a snug little sum in hand ?"

"Faith, then, myself would like it of all things, if I saw any means of getting at the same ! Here's the boy for it !"

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"Faith, then, myself would like to go to America if I saw any means of getting to America, ~~and~~ ~~and~~ the boy for it !"

"Well, now, that's practical and sensible. Look you, Coolin," and he sank his voice low, fixing his eyes upon Murty—"look you, the sum of £200 will be paid down, *if the girl is carried off*, not else. This is to be her marriage portion. And if that meddling, impertinent, mischief-making, strange priest could be carried off too, anywhere you know, and anyhow; if he could be got away from Peterstown, or if by any accident he should meet with his end, Coolin, as accidents will happen in this divided country, there will be £300 more. Otherwise, perhaps you are not aware that £300 are offered for your own apprehension?"

There was a dead pause. Moylan had thrown away his cigar, and Murty sat with his pipe suspended, the fire slowly decaying, and the smoke curling upwards in long gray coils, as if marking the moments of refusal or acceptance of the final crime. Moylan could have counted the beating of his own heart. Slowly, more slowly, coiled up the last faint curl of smoke; the last spark went out.

"I'm your man!" was said, in a hoarse whisper, by Murty, and his face looked ghastly as he said it.

Moylan handed him the remainder of the gold, and almost started at the death-like coldness of the hand he touched.

"When you have anything to say, you know, come to the agency after dark, and dress yourself decently," he said, in a voice not like his own.

Murty nodded sullenly. His tongue seemed to have lost its use. Moylan then left the recess in

the rocks, walked slowly to the place where he had tied up his cob, mounted him, and rode back to Peterstown "fiery fast."

The sun streamed up gladly out of the glittering sea ; the sea gulls screamed and dipped into the waves ; the larks flew up into the clear blue sky, singing the praises of God who made them. But the man upon whom they looked down,—the man who was their master, who was the image of God, and to whom He had given an immortal soul to be happy with Him for ever in Heaven,—flung himself down upon the ground in reckless despair, knowing that he had given himself to the devil, and not repenting the deed.

He did not see the face of bewildered and yet recognising pity which bent over the rocks above him, and in his poor, foolish, but yet wisest way, made prayers for him in his heart. He did not see the tears pouring from large mournful eyes, or the beads told many times, which Shamus, like a pleading angel, offered up on the heights above. And if he had seen, he would have despised and flung them aside, as he had his own soul.

CHAPTER XII.

"Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing."
Longfellow.

Moylan rode home so "fiery fast" for more reasons than one. In the note which he had that morning received, along with other news and promises of faithful secret service, there had been a penitent admission of the temporary imprisonment of Brooker, and a petition that that mistake (inevitable if their own safety was to be secured) might be "looked over." Moylan not only "looked over" it himself,—at least till it should be any ways convenient to recall it to view,—but he intended that Brooker also should do the same. And here he felt a little qualm of doubt; for Israel Brooker was a Yorkshire artisan, inheriting a strong Puritanical bias from his Dissenting parents; and although he had relinquished that part of his birthright so far as to belong nominally to the Established Church, he had by no means resigned a very stiff and positive will, which is unmistakably the growth of Yorkshire soils. If he was stiff-necked beyond management, Moylan determined, whatever it cost, Brooker should find employment in some other vineyard than Peters-town. Could he only be induced to work with Malone and Coolin!

At the back of the village he met the very man himself, his pale face more colourless than ever, his eyes sunk and hollow, his whole appearance

ghastly and unwholesome. He looked up as he heard the sound of a horse's tread, and immediately recognised Moylan.

"Why, Mr. Moylan, have the ruffians done you any harm as will as myself? You look strange-like, as if you had had a clip of fear."

"Do I, Brooker? I believe it is your own imagination. What upon earth has happened to you, that you are wandering out here in the early morning like a ghost?"

"Ay, ay; a ghost indeed! And well for me, Mr. Moylan, and for some of your cursed Irish crew, that I am not a ghost in good earnest!"

"Good heavens, man, speak out!" exclaimed Moylan, simulating a great surprise. "What has happened to you?"

"Just what may happen to you or any other honest, God-fearing man in this hellish, Papist-ridden country!" replied Brooker, whose ghastly, strongly-marked face grew more impressive under his fierce fanaticism. "I have been kidnapped by the devil, Mr Moylan, and made to take part in his midnight incantations. I have *seen* the devil, Sir, and some of his imps, and I have spent the night in the pit of hell; and though I live to tell it you, I shall never lose the remembrance of it, or the horror it gives me,—no, not if I live for a thousand years!"

Moylan looked at him as he looked at all with or upon whom he intended to work; and seeing that the fanatic enthusiasm of the Scripture-reader had been so touched that his judgment was scarcely sound upon the matter, he got off his horse, and said soothingly:

"Now, I'll tell you what, my good friend ; you have just fallen into the hands of some of our mountain rapparees, that's all, and they have ill-treated you. Depend upon it, they shall suffer for it, whoever they are. Just sit down here with me for a few minutes, and let me take your deposition. Or stay ; you get on my pony, and ride quietly home to the agency, and I will follow you in a few minutes."

Brooker was so exhausted that this would certainly have appeared the wisest course to any sane man; but he immediately drew back, the glittering spark lit up again in his sunken eyes, and he exclaimed,

"Ride ! Nay, nay ! I have had one ride to-night with the devil's imp looking over my shoulder all the time. I'll never ride again ; it would kill me !"

"Then," said Moylan, becoming more calm and imperative as the other showed himself more ungovernable,—"then, my dear friend, we will go back to the village together, and I will lead my pony behind us. Take my good oak staff, and come along."

Brooker resigned himself to these directions, and very soon they reached the back gate of the agency, of which Moylan had the key. He quietly opened it, led his horse to the stable, took off the bridle and saddle and hung them in their-places, and having thrown a half-measure of corn to the whinnying and expectant cob, he took Brooker's arm and led him to his own room, where the fire was lit, and everything set in order for breakfast. Moylan then made him sit down, and fed him with

strong coffee and a mighty rasher of bacon ; after which the Scripture-reader, being warmed, refreshed, and composed, gave a more coherent account of his adventures in the cave, and entirely satisfied the agent that he had not the slightest idea, nor had had a glimpse, of the names or features of any of the actors in the drama excepting Shamus, whose face was blackened or covered with a mask. He took particular information of the position of the cave, of which he had frequently heard speak by the gaugers as existing, but of whose exact whereabouts no living exciseman was cognisant, and of which there was a traditional horror, owing to a story that a gauger had once been entrapped there by Shaun of the Red Hand, who slowly immured and starved him to death. In fact, the Pool and the whole neighbourhood had so bad a name, that very few people cared to visit it at all, and rather shunned it with fear and that nameless feeling of dread to which the Irish are, particularly subject where blood has been shed.

This being ascertained, Moylan made minute notes of the whole of the narrative detailed to him ; and then tying the papers carefully, he put them into his bureau, and said to Brooker :

“ Now, my dear friend, just to satisfy me, I want you to take an oath on this Bible.”

“ An oath ?—upon what ?” replied Brooker, looking at him.

“ I want you to swear,” said Moylan, carefully suppressing the least emotion upon his marble features—“ I only just want you to swear never to let out the least word, sign, or hint of what has happened to a living creature in or out of the

township—not to Mr. Hall, or to my lord, himself—or we are lost. If this affair were once known, neither your life nor mine would be safe for one hour. When you least expect it, your throat may be cut, or a ball come through your window, and you will never know who fired it or struck the blow. If there is a dangerous conspiracy on foot, as is most likely, secrecy is our only hope. Look to the good of religion, Brooker, and *you* cannot hesitate to take this oath. Are we not both bound together by every means and by the strongest motions to root up Popery out of Ireland? Why should you doubt that I have this as strongly at heart as yourself?"

"I should wish to tell my lord;" was Brooker's quiet reply, after a pause of some length.

Moylan almost gnashed his teeth. A dark and dangerous look shot out of his steely eyes; but as Brooker had his fixed on the window, he did not observe it.

"You are a true Yorkshire tyke, Brooker," he replied, in his calmest tones—"game to the last, and never letting go. I honour you for your faithful service of my lord. But you do not know this country as well as I do. You know it as an Englishman always must—as one of a different race and feelings and instincts, and never piercing through the skin of our people. Still I cannot contend with you, because you act on principle. But you must give way to my views so far as to take the oath partially. Give me one month of strict secrecy, to find out the men who are plotting in that cave. After then you shall tell my *lord* exactly what you please."

Brooker paused and thought. He fixed his dark, mystic-looking eyes upon the agent, as if he was trying to read his heart. Some hidden influence seemed to make him doubt and suspect. Then slowly and doggedly he said: "I will give you one week, Mr. Moylan; not a moment more. After that I shall think it right to inform my lord of all that has passed. I think too many things have been kept from him already."

Moylan bit his lip, but remained silent. He turned away abruptly, and fetched a large Bible from a stand in one corner of the room, and laid it before the Scripture-reader. Brooker waited a few moments, as if offering up a silent prayer. Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

"Mr. Moylan," he said, solemnly, "I have never been sure if you truly believe and love the Word of God or not. There are strange tales about you here and there. If you do *not* believe, I hope you will enquire and pray before it is too late. If you do, take the warning of God's own Scriptures this day. I shall do a little thing now as we have been used to do in Yorkshire among our north-country folk when we are going to decide upon a doubtful matter. I will draw a verse, and fold it down for you to turn over at after I am gone, and I pray it may be for the good of your soul."

He opened the Bible, and where his forefinger had touched, looked at the verse, and in his deep sonorous tones read these words:

"Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him."

Moylan's hard face became rigid as he heard

these words. He laid his hands with a strong, quick grasp upon Brooker.

"Do not be an obstinate fool, Brooker! Give me the month that I ask for. Choose for yourself *life*, as the words say. Do not rush with your eyes open into what may lead to your *death*!"

He spoke so earnestly, and in so disturbed a way, that Brooker was for an instant surprised and shaken.

"Why do you say *so*?" he asked. "Have you a reason? Yet no—no; death is not the worst evil. I will be faithful." He laid his hand firmly on the Bible. "I, Israel Brooker, swear this of my own free will: I take my oath to keep silence as to everything that passed last night *between me and others* for one week from this day, and no longer. So help me God!"

And, without another word, the Scripture-reader slowly folded down the leaf, shut the Bible, and went out of the room.

Moylan's face grew white as ashes as he sat down in front of the fire, and covered his eyes with his hands.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease :
We are all changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.”

Tennyson.

“And so, ye good-for-nothing little scape-grace, while I am kicking my heels in retreat, my back no sooner turned, and you and Randal must want to be settin’ all the town by the ears, and then runnin’ off with yourselves ! Och, *wirrastru, wirrastru!* Here’s a pretty kettle of fish for me to cook !”

“Now, dear Father Murphy—”

“Oh, yes, I’ll be bound its *dear* Father Murphy, isn’t it ! You’ve been makin’ him cheap enough, you little baggage ! It would have been *dear* Father Murphy with a vengeance, when his school-mistress was gone over the border, and himself all the master and mistress left *in it*. I’ve a good mind, that I have, to call you from the altar, Miss Macnamara !”

“Now, dear, dearest Father Murphy, if you were in earnest, if I didn’t know you so well, you’d be killing the last drop of the heart out of me entirely ; but I know you’re only joking, Father dear !”

And Una, with her pleading but trustful eyes, looked imploringly in his face as she knelt for his blessing.

" Well, there, my dear, have it your own way," replied the priest. And making the sign of the cross over her, the kind old man laid his hand lightly upon her head. " Una, my daughter, you have not trusted me so long for nothing. You have been a good child, *avich*; so now get up, and tell me all about your young ruffian, and his bundling the Scripture-reader out of the window. Sure, my child, you will need to keep a stout slip of shillelagh beside you when you marry him !"

Una shook her head saucily, and her teeth showed like a string of pearls as she laughed her denial of any arms being needed against Randal.

" Well, then, you young contradictory upstart, sit down there on the stool, till I have to go to Mick Dolan's to see how is old granny. But stay, where have ye put the two poor little Rooneys, my return prodigals, eh ?

" In the kitchen, dear Father; in the kitchen with old Peggy. Sure she was *coshering* them up finely with sugared porridge !"

" Ah, well might she!" exclaimed the priest, his eyes glistening. " Don't ye know, Miss Una, I love one hair of their dear little heads, (God love and protect them, poor lambs!) more than I do the whole of your fine self, with all your learning and book knowledge?"

" To be sure ye do, Father dear, seeing they are prodigals come back; and I am only the poor 'eldest,' who got nothing at all for his pains. See if I don't turn prodigal too one of these days!"

The only answer she got for this was a shake of the fist from Father Murphy, and something about good oak pills for runaways; and then the priest

settled himself in his large, I cannot call it his *easy* chair, took out his snuff-box, tapped it, gave it a shake, helped himself to a moderate pinch, and bade Una leave off palavering and nonsense, and begin her story.

When it was finished, and Father Murphy had done laughing, which he did till the tears ran down his cheeks, he wiped his eyes, and settled his spectacles again in their place, and said:

"There now, I am glad I know the rights of it, for I have heard several versions, and I dare say I shall hear a few more. But you are right, Una, *avich*, my dear little daughter. Sorry as I am for it, you must both marry at once, and leave the town for a bit. But you'll not forget your old friend and Father, and you'll come back to be buried under the old thorns in the churchyard; and meanwhile we shall see you often, my child, and hear of your doing well."

The large tears gathered thick in Una's eyes, as he spoke. Something very unusual swelled in her throat.

"O Father, dear Father Paul, how can I ever leave you, when I never remember the time that I did not know and love you!"

"And that's true, my child," replied the kind, affectionate old man, in whom the true Irish extremes of fun and deep pathos lay side by side, and in the fullest degree. "You were baptised by this hand,—a funny, *weashy* little laughing thing of a colleen ye were, capering and crowing in your grandmother's arms! Then ye grew big enough to bless yourself in Irish, as old Nora would first have ye learn; and then ye came to say your Cate-

chism, and to make your first confession. Fine and proud ye were that day, *avich!* I think I see you now."

"How well I remember it!" exclaimed Una. "And I had been very naughty, too; and I was angry at having to tell it."

"Yes, ye were never of much account in the way of goodness," said the priest, looking at her comically through his glasses, as she was transported back to her childish days,—though, Heaven help her! she was a thorough child still in innocence and purity of heart.

"Never of much account as to goodness," repeated the old man, taking a fresh pinch of snuff; "but there is one thing I will say of you, Una, *avich machree*,—you never told me the least particle of a lie. Whatever you said, from that height up, I always knew it was as true as steel. Be like that as a married wife, Una; and your husband and your children shall bless you, and you will be a blessing. And now, my little daughter, I must tell you that Father Fitzsimon, that good priest who was here, is looking out for a place for Randal with the monks of Duncarra, and he hopes this week to have it settled. So soon as I have his word, you had best be called* out of hand. Will you tell your grandfather and your grandmother this from me to-night?"

"Ah, yes, indeed will I," exclaimed Una. "May God save and speed you, dear Father Paul, for all your goodness to a poor foolish girl! But about the school, Father? I cannot leave you

* Have the banns published.

worried for the children. Will I wait till you have a good mistress that you like?"

"I think I have got one, my child. I think of trying Elley Blake. What do you say to that?"

"Elley! I didn't know she was to be had. O Father, the school will go wonderful with her! And she's wise-like with elder girls. Oh, that lifts a load off my heart!"

"Well, it took something off mine too," replied the old priest, smiling. "So now go, my daughter; and as soon as you have watered the flowers in the church, go say a little word to our Lord and to His Blessed Mother, and then run home to your grandmother. God bless you, child!"

The kind priest again laid his hand on Una's bowed head.

She then made her little curtsey, and he went out, his thick square form wrapped in a cassock, his white hair flowing back like that of a French abbé; his Office book, well-worn, under one arm, and leaning with the other on a stout oaken staff. Certainly Father Paul Murphy was not handsome. His eyes were small and deep set, his nose was of that kind called "a boiled potato," his cheeks and mouth were large and shapeless; his whole face was of the broadest Milesian type; his brogue was as clear and strong as that of any of his flock. He was not very learned, and in light literature he was altogether defective and behindhand. Though he had the greatest respect for knowledge and for those who possessed it, he himself did not read, and confined his natural good sense and sagacious judgment to a few practical matters, which, in return, flourished and prospered under his hands.

He knew every one of his flock, from the oldest *senachie* to the wee-est toddling baby, and most of the dogs and cats in the cabins. He never forgot a name, or confounded the affairs of one person with those of another. His skill in managing land and cattle, and his knowledge of all kinds of crops, were so eminent, that his advice was sought by most of the parishes round ; and his judgments rarely failed of being true and exact. But it was in his charity and unwearied sympathy for all who wanted it that Father Paul's strongest point lay. His great heart was always at the free disposal of every one in trouble ; and many a time his clothes were given off his back, his few spoons sold, his goods actually pledged, for the poor of his flock, especially for the widowed mother or orphans left without a friend. Many a conceited prig of a tourist, who has laughed at Father Murphy's exposure of his ignorance, and despised him for his brogue and his homely looks, will be thunderstruck at the sight of his place and rewards at the last day. But, after all, of what value are the judgments of men ? If they despised the Master of the poor Irish priest, shall they not despise the priest also ?

So he went his way to Mick Dolan's, whose old mother was near her end, and who wanted *a word in Irish* to help her along the dark valley ; for the sound of good words in the sweet, mournful, heart-stirring old Celtic tongue was doubly good to her long-accustomed ears.

But Una turned into the little gallery which led to the church door ; and after kneeling for a bit, she went up to the altar, and began to take off

the flowers, to arrange, trim, and give them fresh water. Father Paul had given her this constant charge, assigning as a reason that *she had always clean shoes*; but, in his private thoughts, rejoicing that so pure and clean a heart should adorn his altar and sanctuary, and be busy about our Lord. If any one can ever be said to put unquestioning trust in another, Father Murphy put that trust in Una. It was her sweet office, too, to do for him any little "turns" for which old Peggy's eyes now failed her. She sewed his collars to his stocks, made his birrettas, and the immoveable little skull caps in which the children affirmed that he slept. She patched and darned his cassocks, which, with just pride, he displayed to his clerical brethren as "fine embroidery;" and all this with such a modest, playful, unobtrusive manner, that even old Peggy's fiery jealousy never was set alight, and she always thought *she* was conferring favours on Una, and doing "the colleen" a good turn by teaching her how to be useful.

While Una was employed in the church and sacristy, the bright autumn sun came streaming in solemn splendour through the open window, bringing with it those rich heavy odours of autumn glories, which make the death of the year so full of poetic feeling. Mignonette, geraniums, sweet-scented clematis, and the late lingering roses, which trailed all over the church, and with the sea-loving myrtle, seemed to delude themselves into thinking it their native climate.

Outside, the greenest of turf covered the swelling mounds, under which the dead rested till the

Judgment. Stone, or at least, as in a few cases, wooden crosses stood at the head of each grave, with the name and date, and the Christian's petition for a remembering prayer. Many a flower and sweet herb grew and blossomed on these peaceful graves, the fittest types of the faith and trust with which their owners were laid to rest. Overhead, gigantic thorn trees threw their hoary and twisted arms, now yellow in their autumn leafage, and crimson with fruit. The sweet note of the robin was the only sound heard in that quiet burial-ground.

How often, when tracking again and again the "stony ways" of the Seven Dials, of Clare Market, or the courts of Westminster—when hearing the hideous blasphemies poured out like water, when listening to the foul talk or fouler songs uttered by Irish tongues—how often must not the thoughts of any countryman who loves those souls turn to the land of their fathers, and ardently wish that he could transport them back to their own Catholic country again ! And surely they themselves must often feel the same. Many a one, sitting motionless for hours beside her apple stall in a crowded thoroughfare, or vainly striving to keep life in her aged frame by selling cresses and radishes, must turn in heart to the dear churchyards of her own country. She will see again the waving branches of the old thorn-trees, and hear the chanted requiem, " May they rest in peace !" and she will bless the kindly vision which reminds her of the ancient faith in a strange and heathen land.

It was the Saturday's half-holiday, and Una felt

glad to have a little time to think and to pray, as she softly went to and fro. It was always easier to her to pray when her hands were busy. How many things had she to be thankful for!—Father Fitzsimon's great kindness; an opening for Randal; a useful and happy home not too far off. Her grandfather and grandmother might even come and live at Duncarra, and Martin might go to the monks' school, and when he grew up might come to be a monk himself. Martin was so good and so dear. And then the chickens, and eggs, and fresh rolls of yellow butter, that should be brought as presents to Father Paul! And the flowers! there was no such place for flowers as Duncarra, all the country round.

A sudden shade came across the bright patch of sunlight in which Una was standing. A figure passed the windows, that seemed to have been looking in. Una glanced up, but she only saw the long shadow of a retreating form. Some stranger, she supposed, looking for the priest, to go to confession. The flowers were done now, and she began to carry them back to the altar. When she went into the church, she saw a tall figure kneeling at the end, in the shadow of the organ gallery; but after she had come in, the man came forward a little, and by the time she had arranged the altar to her liking, he was kneeling in the front benches. A tall dark gentleman he was, well-dressed and handsome, but with a very large beard and moustache.

Una did not look at him much, for she supposed he was one of the many tourists who came to Peterstown for the salmon fishing, for which

the neighbourhood was famous. But she thought it would be kind just to tell him that if he wanted the priest, he would not be in the confessional till the evening. So she stepped back with her last vase of flowers and her clean duster in her hand, and whispered to him the information that "Father Murphy would not be *in the box* till six o'clock, but that he could be seen at the house at half-past five." The stranger started at her gentle approach like a thief caught in the act, and as she bent her sweet modest face towards him, gazed at it with a strange expression of avidity and fear. This was lost upon Una, for as she was in church her eyes were cast down, and as soon as she had finished her sentence, she returned to the altar, and when she had done her work went into the Lady chapel, and knelt there some time in prayer.

The strange man kept his place, but he certainly was not praying. For some reason which she could not explain, Una could not pray either very long, without seeming to be drawn away by another influence. She had hoped to be quite alone, and now there was a strange gentleman in the church looking at her. Why did not he go away? She wished he would. And as if he too had felt a magnetic influence acting on his will, the stranger got up, and, after dawdling a little in front of a picture, went out into the porch. And then Una felt more free, and was glad.

But her prayers were doomed to be interrupted this day. From the side of the house, stealing through the noiselessly-opened door, a little figure

was seen drawing near to our Lady's altar, and then peeping through the open arcade which, with pillars of Killarney marble, separated the Lady chapel from the passage into the presbytery. Then a soft whispered "Una!" made her look up. Her eyes caught the child's white face of trouble and fear, and there were no more prayers for Una. Her heart froze, she knew not why. She got up hastily, but without noise, for the boy by signs earnestly implored silence; and they both passed through the door leading into the house, and into the study, when Una shut the door, and exclaimed :

"Shamus, *alanna!* what is it? Tell me quick what it is!"

"Whisht! whisht!" murmured the poor natural. "It's nothing yet. But, och! the dove, the white dove, bleeding in the hawk's gripe! She struggles and flutters; but his claws are in her heart!"

"Shamus, *acushla machree,* pulse of my heart, what is it? Speak to me, Shamus, *avich!*"

The poor boy's large eyes wandered. He seemed struggling in vain to express the images of horror and fear which clouded his mind. Whenever he was in this excited state, he could only utter disjointed sentences, conveying, in some kind of figures or apologue, what he meant to say. He looked up into Una's white face, and struggled for words. "The eagle must fly with the dove—now, now! and let the hawks fly together. But oh, the wolf, the wolf! he sees too far; his cruel claws are too long!"

While Una was trying to translate this in her

fluttered mind, and waiting for the fit to pass off, the same shadow was again thrown on the window. Shamus, nearly convulsed with dread and excitement, drew Una and himself into the farthest corner of the room, and crouched upon the floor. Some one seemed to look in, and seeing nothing, to pass on. As the last sound of retreating steps vanished, Shamus drew himself up from the posture into which he had seemed crushed, and imitating low, but perfectly, the sound of birds frightened at a bird of prey, said in a whisper, "The hawk! the hawk! Oh, do not stay to be killed!"

"Who is it, Shamus?" said Una, under her breath. "Is it that tall black man, who came into the church? Who is he, dear?"

"Black—yes, black! oh, how could Shamus know?" he exclaimed, wringing his hands in wild despair. "How could Shamus know that his heart was black as night, when his friend was kind and good to him? How could Shamus not help and tell him things, and never know what his black friend thought in his heart? And now it is bad wicked Shamus; he never can tell what his friend is going to do! Oh, to swear on the Holy Relics never to tell, and perhaps be killed in a minute after, and go to hell for ever! O Mary, sweetest mother, *Mahair avich machree!* Never to see your dear face, for ever, for ever!"

The frightful images conjured up and confused in the boy's clouded mind so completely overwhelmed the little reason he possessed, that he fell into strong convulsions, uttering now and then low mournful cries, which went to Una's heart. *She flew for Peggy*, obtained from her a "strong

drop" of mountain whiskey, and poured it down the boy's throat. She wisely thought that sleep or insensibility would be the best way of restoring any thing like calm to so frail a mind and body.

After a long time, when the cries had sunk to low, sad moans, Father Murphy came in, and when Una had related to him all that had passed the kind and astonished old priest desired her to help Peggy carry Shamus to one of the bedrooms in the top of the house, and to stay there herself till he returned. He desired Peggy, for her part, to give Una her tea; and the sacristan (who had been in the village) to stay in the kitchen till he came back, and to let no one into the house. Then, again taking his stout oak staff in his hand, he went out on an errand.

CHAPTER XIV.

"To serve me well you all should do your duty,
Teach me to be your queen, and you my subjects;
Oh, serve me well, and teach yourselves that duty.'

Richard III.

Father Murphy returned with two supporters. Old Macnamara and Molina came with him to take Una home. The sagacious and long-experienced parish priest knew enough of the country and the state of Peterstown affairs not to be aware that abductions were possible; and until Una and Randal were married, he insisted that she should be carefully watched over, without

alarming her or exciting too much observation on her movements. Shamus he would keep at his house till the mystery now hanging over him and others unknown should be explained. And now he would like to have his house cleared, and a little peace to say his office and prepare his sermon.

So he gave them his blessing with a flourish of tranquillity which covered a very heavy heart; and after watching Shamus in his flushed, feverish sleep, he went into the church and prayed for some time, and then settled with himself (among other things) to go to Duncarra to-morrow, and see Father Lawrence about the place for Randal.

This resolution he made just at the moment when Eudora Powderhouse was making another of a different kind. It was to go round the village and look up the children for her school; for she thought it time, and high time too, to make some fresh demonstration of zeal and progress. Both these resolutions were kept; but as it is well known that no one can be in two places at once, save and except Sir Boyle Roche's bird, we must make up our minds to watch the progress of one only.

Immediately after breakfast, and while my lord was still immersed in the *Times*, Eudora, in her pea-jacket and felt-hat, and accompanied by the Rev. Mr. Hall, set forth. It was partly, also, with a view to giving him a course of tonics that Eudora undertook this "progress." It must be owned that any one looking at the pair as they started, the lady with her hands tucked deeply into her pockets, her gown well reefed and close-

hauled, as if to encounter a rousing gale, her thick nailed "clumps," and a knotted slip of oak under one arm ; and Mr. Hall, with his meek long-tailed black coat, and mild deprecating bend—any one looking at them both, I say, would certainly have accepted the lady as the best man of the two.

At the first door on the list they knocked. No answer from within.

"Push the door, Mr. Hall," said Eudora ; "I am sure I hear some one inside."

Mr. Hall obediently applied his shoulder to the frail door, and as it somewhat suddenly gave way, he was nearly precipitated on his nose in the middle of the cabin. Eudora looked vexed, and marched in with a magisterial air.

"Good morning, Mrs. Sweeny. Pray, why was the door fastened in this way ?"

"Sure, ma'am, my lady, the childer is kilt with the cowld intirely, poor innicints ! and it is I that have not a rag to their backs, my lady, and I cannot send them to school. I have been bad myself, so I have."

Three shivering children, of a truth, sat in a heap on the floor, while one shirt apparently made raiment for them all. Some cheering thought, however, seemed to sustain their spirits, for at intervals during Miss Powderhouse's colloquy with their mother they crouched and shook with irrepressible though silent mirth.

"And that is just why I came," replied Eudora sternly, and as if not to be "done." "As to clothes, Mrs. Sweeny, I am sure you have had calico and flannel enough, and print too, to clothe these children twice over—unless you have pawned

and made away with it. Mind, *I will have the children*. Whatever they have got, or not got, they must be in my school next week, or I shall speak to Mr. Moylan to put your husband out of the cabin."

"Och, sure, my lady, and you wouldn't have the heart!" exclaimed the poor woman, the tears rushing to her eyes; "you wouldn't do it on a poor, frindless, sickly father with six childer! And a home so hard to find at this time of year, my lady."

"That is nothing to me," replied Eudora; "you cannot come over me in that way. You have had a fair offer of everything to make you comfortable, and I will paint and thatch for you myself if you will only be reasonable, and send your children. I wonder you are not ashamed to stand between them and a capital schooling. But, any way, choose now between that and dismissal."

Dismissal, to wander on the bare mountains, in a winter when often even the sheep had to be withdrawn from the walks, the air was so biting and cruelly sharp!

What wonder that Mrs. Sweeny falteringly promised, or that, when the lady and the parson had disappeared, she should throw herself into a chair, with her apron over her face, wringing her hands and rocking to and fro in an agony of sorrow?

"O merciful God! glory be to His name! O Mary, Mother of Sorrows, *mahair machree!* help a poor put-upon woman! Och, what will Father Murphy say when he knows it is me have banned *myself from the altar and the absolution!* But,

och ! how will I let my poor colleens die of the hunger and the cruel cowld without a home ?”

The children, scared and wretched, clung round their mother, and they all sobbed and cried together.

It is true that neither Miss Powderhouse nor Exeter Hall heard these words, nor measured the agony of that mother’s heart. But that cry did enter the Ear which is always open to the prayer of the poor and oppressed, and a Hand recorded what should one day be read out before all men and angels.

Little thinking of this, the two apostles of the West-of-Ireland-Religious-Enlightenment Society passed on to the next cabin in their list. This door was also closed, and they knocked twice without getting any answer. Between these two knocks a curious pantomime had taken place within, which, if the closed door had been made suddenly transparent, would perhaps have afforded them some of the amusement and interest it excited in a neighbour who was taking his view from a garden plot behind.

He, at all events, fully relished the spectacle of the meal tub being turned upside down upon two bricks, enclosing the master of the cabin within it; and of the two little children being whipped up from the floor, and while exhorted softly to be “as whisht as fishes,” being popped, one into the oven, the other into the baking bin, over which an old petticoat did duty as a cover.

This being performed in less time than it takes to write, Mrs. Rooney was taken very bad with the face ache, and went, coughing and bandaged up, to

undo the door for their honours ; though she could not think it *was* their honours so early in the morning, and made sure it had been nothing more than blind O'Reilly the piper calling for his bit.

" Well, good woman, but that has nothing to do with the doors being fastened," replied Mr. Hall stiffly. " Are you aware that this is the second time to-day that Miss Powderhouse has been kept waiting at cabin doors in the cold ? This really must not happen again."

Mrs. Rooney's cough was so troublesome that she did not catch what was said. She begged pardon, looked innocent, held her hand to her head. She was so deaf with this wearisome toothache, she had not heard his honour's knock. Indeed, she *might* have been in a bit of a drowse, for she had slept none to speak of.

Eudora looked distrustful.

" And are your husband and children asleep too ?" she asked. " And where are the children ? And why have not they been to school lately ?"

" In truth, they have been sadly poorly, poor things ; and I thought I would send them to the mountains, to widow Collins, for a taste of a change."

" And how soon will they be home again ?" asked Mr. Hall, who thought it time to be taking some of the business on himself.

The woman could not say. They were doing better ; but a little time was wanted to give them strength.

" Where is your husband ?" abruptly asked Eudora again.

She turned round, and her piercing eyes wandered in every direction. It was too late to divert her attention. Two undeniable feet, with brogues on them, rested at the bottom of the meal tub, forming, apparently, the basis on which it stood ; and Eudora angrily and peremptorily ordered the culprit to be uncovered. A torrent of rebukes and reproaches fell upon him ; and it was made manifest that, at the risk of losing his cabin, his land, his subsistence, and the crops by which his hard and industrious labour was to be repaid, this free labourer in a free and Christian land was forced to engage to send his children to Miss Powderhouse's school, to be taught a religion which he knew was untrue.

So the entry was made in Mr. Hall's neat purple note book, under the head of " No. 2," and from that moment until he was released by Father Murphy at a ceremony at which we shall be present, the strong powerful cottier pined and wasted to a shadow under the painful ban of a burdened conscience, and the loss of the sacraments by which alone we can be said to live.

They went on their way to another cabin. Here too the door was locked, but on a violent shaking from the hand of Mr. Hall it flew open, and disclosed Biddy Porter sitting at dinner with her eight young children. They were gathered round a large bowl of steaming potatoes, cooked with a small piece of bacon. The eight young Porters turned their sixteen large healthy eyes upon Miss Powderhouse with a look of undisguised repugnance and fear. They were fine,

sturdy, handsome children, from two to thirteen years old.

"Mrs. Porter," said Eudora, anxious to conciliate the mother of eight scholars, "you have not sent your children to school lately. I do hope you will try and do so soon. If you cannot get them ready in time, I will pay a girl to come in and help dress them?"

"You are very kind, my lady," said Mrs. Porter, dropping her curtsey respectfully; "but I have no call to encroach on your goodness. My children go to school every day."

"Every day! Where do you send them?"

"To their own school, my lady—to Miss Macnamara's, in the Upper Street."

"Mrs. Porter, I am surprised at you. How many times have I told you that is not the landlord's school? Mr. Hall has preached fifty times, and written, and spoken constantly in public, that it is my lord's earnest desire that all the inhabitants of Peterstown should send their children to his own school. They have books, copy-books, and Bibles entirely free, and the very best education without a farthing's cost. Why will you not take advantage of such generous benefits?"

"I will tell you, my lady," replied Mrs. Porter respectfully; "I do not, I am sure, wish to lessen the advantages to be had in your ladyship's school, perhaps more even than in our own; though, indeed, that is a thorough good school and mistress, God bless her! But, my lady, my children has souls to be saved; and as I believe in the One Faith, and the one Church Christ planted on the Rock, I wish my children to believe the same

truth. I should not think of expecting to go to Heaven myself, and to send my children the while to hell. That is why all other things seem little to my eyes compared with the blessed faith."

Mrs. Porter went on so respectfully and quietly, that until she had said all her say Eudora could not realize what she heard. She then replied sharply,

" You are a very foolish woman ; but you will have to choose this day between your landlord and your priest. We know very well that it is he who puts you all up to this disobedient, bigoted, obstinate resistance to your landlord, and he is not going to allow it any longer to go unpunished. Either you send your children to my school, or leave his estate."

" And is that the way the English clergy preach the gospel ?" said Mrs. Porter, calmly looking at Miss Powderhouse. " Our blessed Lord said the tree should be known by its fruits ; and, my lady, if these are the fruits of the English Church, it condemns itself without words."

" Insolent woman !" exclaimed Exeter Hall, " do you bandy words and controvert with Miss Powderhouse ? A pretty pass things are come to in this country !"

" They are indeed come to a sad pass, sir," replied Mrs. Porter more quickly, and her pale thoughtful face flushed a little. This poor country, that once was the happy Island of Saints and the light of Europe, is become a bone of contention, and a prey given over to Satan for a time, like holy Job. And like him she sits on the dunghill, poor and despised, and stripped of all

things, till God shall please to raise her up again. But, sir, like holy Job too, though both friends and enemies call her a fool, and weary her to curse God, and die by forsaking her faith, she will hold by Him to the end, and He will keep her in the hollow of His Hand."

" You are determined, then !" said Eudora half regretfully, for she was able to appreciate the undaunted love and courage of this true servant of God. " You are determined to banish yourself from all your friends, and to become outcast with your fine children ?"

" My lady," replied Mrs. Porter, looking steadfastly at the little wooden crucifix which hung on the chimney-piece, " deeply should I grieve to leave the roof where I was happy with my dear husband, and where all my children were born. But loth as I should be in heart, I would take a bag and beg through all the world, sooner than give up the souls left in my charge to the enemy. It is not needful to live, but it is needful to be saved in Heaven."

There was something so clear, so calm, so noble, in the widow's eye as she made her heroic answer, that for the time even bigotry and malice cowed down before it, and confessed their best efforts beaten to the ground.

" I am sorry for you," said Eudora at length ; " I am very sorry. I esteemed you, and I hoped to do you good. I will leave you this one day to think better of your interest."

" Do not be sorry, dear lady. I grieve more for *you*," replied the widow, while the tears, which were dry for herself and her children, now filled

her eyes in pity for her enemy. "You have a noble heart, Miss Powderhouse; why will you not follow it, and learn the truth?"

The truth? Eudora wrong? Eudora learn of the Widow Porter what was right? She tried to smile scornfully, but something she could not comprehend wrung her heart. She turned hastily away, and left the cabin.

"These people are insupportable!" exclaimed Exeter Hall. "What patience, what angelic meekness you possess, Miss Powderhouse! I really thought—"

"Pray, Mr. Hall, do not think about it," replied Eudora haughtily. "I am too vexed to talk. My mind is troubled."

"I do not wonder at it," sighed Mr. Hall, turning his eyes up to Heaven, and quite misunderstanding her answer. "These priests have really a diabolical power. It is Antichrist itself; and these are the latter times in which he is to come. With my lamented friend, the Rev. Llewellyn Griffith Glendower, I read the Hebrew points of the number of the Beast—*six thousand* and sixty-six, not six hundred, as is usual; and I firmly believe that in the year sixty-six the Millennium will begin, when Popery and all its horrors, the Beast, the Scarlet Lady, and the Man of Sin, will be chained up in everlasting torment; and all these poor Romanists, who so obstinately refuse to be converted, will share their fate. Ah, it quickens one's zeal, it warms one's heart, it stirs one up to rescue as many of these still innocent children as possible from so awful a doom!"

CHAPTER XV.

"Eighty odd years of sorrow have I seen,
And each hour's joy wrecked with a week of teen."
Richard III.

They had come to a cabin much superior to the rest of its neighbours. It was neatly thatched and whitewashed ; and a late clematis and a Virginia creeper covered it with festoons. The door, divided in two parts, was closed only at the bottom, and an old woman, in the high frilled cap and the scarlet handkerchief of the west and south of Ireland, was seen busily spinning flax from a large wheel, which was reeled off by a handsome boy. Forming a background to this pleasant picture was a little rack of plates and pans, as clean as hands could make them, and a bracket holding a white image of Immaculate Mary, with a crucifix over it. Two or three sacred prints hung round or under it, with a little holy-water stoup of earthenware.

"Good morning Mrs. Macnamara ; how are you to-day ?" said Eudora.

"It is Miss Powderhouse ; I knew by the voice," replied the old woman, whose fine dark eyes were sightless. "Welcome to the cabin, my lady. Martin, place a stool."

"Do not disturb yourself, I beg," said Eudora. "Mr. Hall, you had better sit down ; you will be tired. Mrs. Macnamara, where is Michael ?"

"He is at his work, my lady ; it wants an hour

to his coming home. And indeed I do not think he will come the day, for he took a bag with him, and maybe he'll dine at his work."

"And Una is at the school-house, I suppose ? It is chiefly about her I have come to talk. I am not pleased with her at all."

"I sorrow to hear it," replied old Nora, and a shade passed over her expressive face. "It is not often I hearken to complaints of Una."

"I believe she means well," said Miss Powderhouse ; "but she takes unwarrantable liberties with my children, and I really cannot have it done."

"You'll excuse me, my lady ; but if I am to tell Una, I must know the rights of it," said Nora. "What children are you speaking anent ?"

"Children out of my school. She has wheedled some of them away, and got them to her own school, which I will not allow. She has either sent for the Rooneys, or set some of the other children to put them up to running away ; and they are gone."

"Daniel Rooney's children, up towards the mountain, is it, my lady ?"

"Yes, it is his little girls that have run away from my school."

"But, my lady, them Rooneys is born and bred Catholics, sure ?"

"Well, I can't help that. The parents were wise enough to send the children to my school, where they learn several trades, besides geography and grammar, and other things, to get them on in life ; and if they choose to do this, what have you, or Una, or any one else, to say about it ? Rooney

did it of his own choice ; and I suppose you'll allow that in a free country a man may choose his own religion and his own way of bringing up his children ? and I will not have them interfered with. If the children stay at the priest's school, Rooney shall quit his cabin and land."

" Oh, my lady, that would be hard, would it not ?" replied Nora, dropping the flax-thread from her hands, and clasping them together. " The poor man has been so sick, too ; and his wife is a poor weakly thing ; and where in all the wide world would they go, coming the wintry time ?"

" That is nothing to me," replied the undaunted Eudora ; " I will not have the children in my school interfered with. If any one does so, he is answerable for the hardship, not I. If Una chooses to seduce my children, it is she who will turn their parents out on the mountains. She had better look to it, for I think, myself, that it would be exceedingly cruel. You must tell her so from me."

" Oh, think better of it, my lady," said Nora, fixing her large sightless eyes on Eudora. " Think of what you are taking on yourself. We are poor ; we have hard toil to get poor food, poor shelter ; and a sack of chaff is the softest of our feather beds. We work from morning till night, from the youngest years of life to its very end. We do this with cheerful and willing hearts, and sure I am that our Peterstown folk would gladly walk round the world to do you a service, or even to give you a pleasure. But leave us our religion, my lady ; leave us our faith, our priest, and our God. It is all we ask for a life of faithful service. Think of

the prayer of the poor, my lady, and how it goes up to God."

During a few moments Eudora was silent, for newly-awakened thoughts were working in her heart. In this interval Exeter Hall conceived that it was a good opportunity for him to speak.

"Good woman," he said, "you must understand our motive in visiting you thus. Miss Powderhouse comes to you as the representative of her brother, your excellent landlord. He is determined that all his people shall have the advantage of a good Christian education. He has built schools, he has given you Scripture-readers to make the blessed Bible known in this benighted land, and a pastor (though unworthy) to explain to you its saving doctrines. My poor woman, read but that blessed book, lay aside your Popish errors, and judge for yourself."

"Judge for myself, your honour? And sure I have," replied Nora, smiling. "Is it a Christian education we want? And sure are not Catholics, believing in the Church Christ planted on the blessed Rock of Peter, the first and oldest Christians of all? And if we cannot speak so glib the holy Bible words as your own people, who *practises* the Bible best, those who assist every day at the blessed Mass, believing His Body and Blood to be there as Christ said Himself, or those who deny His words, and say He never meant what He said? I ask your pardon humbly, sir, for I never meant to lift a word of dispute; but when I hear Master Brooker speak of the Bible, the Bible for ever, and I see how all Protestants cut and carve it to their own liking, I think it is not showing much revere-

rence for the blessed Word of God, and that they do not take it into mind that good Catholics practise it in their lives."

It is not certain what Mr. Hall might have replied. He was surprised at the answer, and it was new to him ; but he no doubt was preparing a cutting reply, when Eudora spoke.

"The long and short of it, Mrs. Macnamara, is this : Una must give up the Rooney's children, and their parents must keep to their word or give up their land. I have but one meaning, and one way of acting."

And they left the cabin without a word of farewell. Mr. Hall was for once not sorry to cut short the debate.

"Grandmother," said the boy, when they were gone, "Una will never give up the Rooneys. They came back of their own will, and said they would be cut in pieces before they wint souping again. And so would I, grandmother ; I would not obey Miss Powderhouse, for all she looks so big and grand in her man's hat and coat."

"Whisht ! Martin you've no call to be onrespectful to the lady. And she's a fine creature too, if God would but touch her heart, and lift her out of the ruck of Scripture-readers and all the lave on't. Pray for her, boy ; say the round of the beads for her, dear, that the Blessed Virgin may show her what a woman ought to be that is right and good ; but it isn't good to judge them as is set over us."

"Ah, Nanna darling, but perhaps the black Satan set them over us, and not the Almighty God. I always think of that since grandfather told us

about holy Job and how he was harried by the enemy for a time."

" Well, then, *cushla machree*, it is good of you to remember grandfather's good words, for he has a power of them, God bless him for it; but you may be sure the Almighty kept watch of the Evil One, and had one eye safe on him all the time, to see that he did not go beyond his leave. And if so be He has let him vex us for our sins, He will take care of us too, and won't let him do us too bad a turn."

" Yes, Nanna darling; but what I mean is, that the Scripture-reader, and all of them, must be Satan's friends, if he put them over us. And then we ought not to love them; we ought to hate them with all our hearts!"

This new theological view was puzzling to Nora. She shook her head as she made her wheel go slowly round again, and said, after a pause, " I can't say all I mean, *asthore*, and you must ask Father Murphy to tell you; but you see, *avich*, we are not *sure* who sent them, after all, so it is best not to hate them, as the Almighty says we must love our enemies, and do them good."

" Yah!" exclaimed Martin, in deep disgust, " I could never love Israel Brooker, the mean skinker! and I should like to duck him in the deepest part of Lough Carra, I should! That's the good I should like to do *him*!"

Nora laid her free hand gently on the boy's handsome curly head. " *Ma bouchal*, you shall be a wiser man than you are a boy. Did you ever hear grandfather say he hated any one, or wished to duck him in the Lough?"

"No, Nanna, I never did ; but he has grey hair, and stoops. I am not like grandfather, and I *can't abide* Israel Brooker."

"What did the Lord of Glory first say, Martin, *avich*, when He was laid upon the cross?"

Martin turned his immense great eyes to the little crucifix :

"'Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do,' " he replied after a short pause. "Must I forgive Israel Brooker ? *Does grandfather* forgive him, and Father Murphy ?"

"Yes, *ma bouchal* ; that in course they do. Father Murphy is a true servant of God, and follows His blessed example."

"Then I must try," replied Martin, heaving a deep sigh. "Nanna, I mean to be a monk at Duncarra when I grow up, like Father Lawrence. O Nanna ! and here comes Una for dinner with us !" And down went the reel and the flax on the floor, and the impetuous boy rushed out of the cabin to seize his sister, and, as he said, to squeeze her into a thread-paper with kisses.

CHAPTER XVI.

"As I intend to prosper and repent,
So thrive I in my dangerous attempt
Of hostile arms, myself myself confound!"
Richard III.

A little while after Eudora had made her renowned "progress," and while Peterstown still felt a kind of weight or cloud from so many threats to poor tenants, Una was one afternoon alone with Martin in the girls' school. The last lingering scholar had reluctantly concluded her confidences to "the mistress," with whom they all dearly loved to pour out their hearts in private, and had led her little brother away through the gate. The last missing pannikin and much-bewept sun-bonnet had been triumphantly dragged from under a bench, and the owner's dawning tears changed into a broad noon of radiant smiles. Even the last little penitent had, by Una's firm but gentle expostulation, cast out the dumb and obstinate devil which had possessed the house all the afternoon, and having begged pardon and said a little prayer before our Lady's image, had gone away with a subdued but peaceful face to her own home.

Still Una lingered. First she finished scoring the roll, and after that was done she put the school-cupboard in perfect order, in which Martin, with great delight, assisted. This was only to gain time; for Una really waited for Randal. He

had promised to come that evening, after many disappointments, to put fresh earth and ivy into the pots on the altar-bracket ; and for this, and several other little fancy gardening-jobs, Una still waited on.

The late autumn sun now poured its last rays through the clean-swept schoolroom, touching the pictures and desks one after another with a flood of ruddy gold. There was not a sound to be heard but the ticking of the large clock, and the joyful clack, at intervals, of Martin's tongue ; and a happier or more peaceful scene could scarcely be imagined. Happy school, and happy school-hours ! They had power to rob sorrow of its sharpest thorns. Suddenly a man's step was heard, and the little gate swung to.

"There's Randal !" exclaimed Martin gladly ; and he ran to the door, saying, "Come in, come in ! Una is quite tired out waiting for you !"

"Well, sir, if I had known such an honour was done me, I should certainly have flown on wings," replied a voice, but not the one that he expected. A tall, dark, well-dressed man stepped into the school, taking off his hat with freedom, but with a manner which well imitated that of a gentleman.

"I beg your pardon for intruding on what, I believe, are your domains, Miss Macnamara, I am a stranger in the country, and am lodging here for awhile to see it, and to make some inquiries. I am much interested on the subject of schools and their teachers ; and I hope to introduce myself to your good priest, who, I am told, is very well acquainted with this subject."

Una, unaccustomed to such long sentences, replied that he was ; and then added that school time was from nine till four, and that after that time she could not receive visitors, nor even ask them to come into the school, without Father Murphy's permission. She hoped he would call another day, in the morning. With this she supposed he would go, as, having made her little curtsey, she went into the class room, to seek her own hat and cloak. Where could Randal be ? and oh ! where was he this evening, of all evenings, when these inquisitive strangers seemed never to be done with ? When she returned, after a few minutes, from locking the yard door and closing the windows at the back, there he stood still.

"I am sorry to be in a hurry, sir," she said, rather more stiffly than before ; "but I must close the school now. Martin, get your cap, dear, and come out directly. I am going. Grandfather and Randal will be coming to meet us."

"If it would not be too great a liberty," said the strange gentleman respectfully, "I should like to accompany you to the village. I was waiting to leave you my card ; but as you are going the same way, I will do my best to lend you the protection you were waiting for." He gave her a neat card, on which Una read : "Mr. Edmund Lefroy, 13 Harcourt Street, Dublin."

She wished him far enough away ; but there was something about him so quiet and unalarming, that she had no reasonable plea for refusing so slight a request. It was a very little way to her grandfather's, and it would be foolish to mind. So she took Martin's hand, to secure his remain-

ing by her side, and they all left the school together. Mr. Lefroy certainly made the most of his opportunity. He talked on, quietly, but amusingly, uttering many excellent, and several entertaining remarks; glancing principally at the bad attempts made at proselytising the Catholic tenantry, and at the life poor cottiers led by being tenants-at-will to foreign landlords. As these were every-day topics among themselves, and on which they were all at home, Una felt quite at ease, and insensibly lost her tone of extreme reserve.

The conversation was therefore carried on without restraint, though chiefly on one side, till they came to the bridge over the stream, which here suddenly widened, and gave itself all the airs of a river. Across this bridge stood a picturesque old archway, which had formerly been a fortified gate-tower belonging to an ancient barony of the neighbourhood, now extinct.

Within this peaceful and moss grown old archway were seen and heard three figures, gesticulating in anything but peaceful attitudes. At that very moment the stoutest of the three figures dealt a heavy blow at the one with whom he had been disputing, and the other joined in to help. The third figure defended himself at long odds against two foes. Little Martin screamed, and threw up his hands.

"Una! oh, Una! it is Randal! Those two are fighting him! Oh, they will kill him!"

"Not so fast, my boy!" exclaimed Lefroy. "Two to one is not fair, is it? But now we can have a four-handed round!" and running swiftly

upon the belligerents, he pinioned one (no other than Israel Brooker) in his powerful arms, and so left Molina at liberty to repel our friend Coolin, whom he accordingly planted by a most successful blow, and was about to close and trip him up, when that worthy, turning a malignant eye upon Malone, and muttering a bitter curse upon "rival lovers," suddenly wrenched himself free, leapt the wall on to the river path, and fled as fast as his sinewy legs could carry him.

This being done, Lefroy (as we must for the present call him) released the Scripture reader, and held him at arm's length. Brooker glared at him with an evil eye, but had not the slightest idea of his identity, or of having ever seen him before. He was more occupied with venting his spite and wrath upon Una. His smile, as he looked at her, was any thing but pleasant.

"I congratulate you, Miss Macnamara, on your new and powerful ally. It is not difficult to see what animates his zeal; considering the slight hold yon brawling and ruffianly boy has on his country, I think you do well to look ahead, and provide two strings to your bow. So I wish you all haste to the wedding. I give *you* joy, sir, (to Lefroy) "of your sweet young wife; but have a care—Papists are a slippery set, and priests can give leave for all kinds of sin!" And having hissed out his venom, Brooker tore his arm from Lefroy's grasp, ran swiftly down the side path to the river, and was soon out of sight.

It all passed so quickly, and each turn of affairs was so unexpected, that Una, still lost in amazement, stood holding Molina's arm with both her

little hands clasped round it, and looking at him as if it were a dream from which she feared to awake. And he, like a dream too, seemed wholly changed. His arms were folded, his eyes fixed gloomily on the ground. Had he nothing to say to her? What had bewitched him, and turned him to stone?

"Well!" said Lefroy, taking advantage of the opening, "I must say we came up just in the nick of time. Who was that hulking fellow that gave you the tremendous blow?"

Molina roused himself from his abstraction, and exerted himself to make some suitable answer and acknowledgment to the "gentleman." But his words grew incoherent, his thoughts seemed far away. In answer to Una's whispered and fervent inquiries if he was badly hurt, he smiled at her for an instant in his own dear way, and looked down upon her fondly as she clasped his arm. But something checked the smile and blighted the look.

"He says he is the new otter killer to my lord," replied he, in answer to Lefroy; "and he lays to my charge being out on the streams and making snares for the otters, to sell their skins. Sorrow enough I have to do without hunting wild beasts, then! But, God knows, enemies and charges are starting up on every side, true or false, it don't matter, for the worry they give. But that don't matter, sir, to you. But how came you—" He stopped with that true politeness and delicacy which greets you behind the plough and over the milk pail in Ireland, as it does in certain street

crossings, alleys, and courts well known to some of us in London.

While watching these two, Lefroy's brow had become dark as night. All the little way he thought he had made, all his outlay of pains, flattery, self-restraint, and ingenuity, seemed swept away at a breath. They were absorbed, wrapt up in one another. In their world he had no place. He had ceased to live to them at all. His passions, which had been bound by a strong but temporary chain, in the hope of a golden future, flamed out and threatened to burn up all his concealments, disguises, and even ordinary prudence about himself. Unconsciously, he glared at Molina like a crouching tiger. Unconsciously, his eye alternately turned on Una, with an expression which happily she did not see, nor could have understood.

Randal, however, turning round from her, *did* both see and understand, and startled, he fixed his eyes more entirely and carefully upon him. Something in their expression recalled Lefroy to a sounder mind. He lifted his hat courteously, but all his efforts could not veil the bitterness of his tone.

"I shall wish you good evening," he said to Una; "I see that my company and my protection will be no longer required. I still hope you will redeem your promise made before we were disturbed by this unfortunate fray."

Una said she should be doubly glad to do any thing for "a friend in need," and she held out her hand warmly. Randal was in duty bound to do the same for his timely ally, and he felt half

ashamed of his suspicions as he did so. Lefroy grasped his hand hard, and then checking something he was about to say, turned abruptly, and was soon out of sight among the scattered houses of the village.

CHAPTER XVII.

“Who being pricked
In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armour secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ailed him, hardly knowing it himself ”
Tennyson.

But though “the devil” had “turned aside for envy,” he seemed to have left his mark on Molina. The gloom out of which Una had lifted him by the magic of her voice, and by the irresistible charm of her frank, winning, innocent ways, now settled down on him again, and he walked on moodily beside her, as if lost in troubled and painful thought.

For a little while Una allowed Martin to keep his hold of her hand, and to chatter on about the fish, the swallows, and the cows in the fields, whom he individualized and pointed out for her admiration or comment. But then Una could not bear it any longer. She saw that the “dark fit” which came on Randal when he was discouraged was now mixed with new and more bitter matter,

and she gently loosed her hand from the boy's grasp.

"Martin dear," she said, "run over to Dan Doolan's, and buy us a nice white cake-loaf for supper. I dare say Randal will come in and take a bit with grandfather to-night. Choose a nice one, darling."

Martin, proud of the errand and his coppers, declared he would help Dan take it out of the oven himself, and ran off as lightly as a bird. Una laid the disengaged hand on Randal's folded arms, and said caressingly,

"Randal, *avich achree*, what on earth is troubling your mind to-night? And do tell me, dear, as quick as ye can, what were those men really wanting of ye? Is there more than ye have told? Oh, for the love of God and His Blessed Mother, do not hide it from me!"

Randal started from his gloomy reverie. He looked down at the face turned up towards him. The tears had gathered in her eyes. Her expression was touching; it showed the utter love and devotion to him that a wife should show. Could she—could she for a moment have thought of another? Surely it was impossible. Where had his thoughts been wandering?

"Una, darling, *acushla!* I have been very miserable, very bad—wicked entirely."

Una felt her breath coming and going quickly.

"Speak, speak, pulse of my heart! Surely there is no wound so bad as a hidden wound; let me hear the *very worst!*"

"You are right, Una; you are always right; but oh, I trust in God you will never know what

has been troubling me to-day ; never know the thirsting, burning, tearing agony of a jealous mind !”

“ Jealous !” exclaimed Una, in the utmost amazement—“ jealous ! Why, sure, darling, you must be dreaming !”

“ Listen, Una dearest, listen. You do not know a man’s heart, *avich* ! A woman is made clean and altogether contrary, I do believe ; and that is why a man and woman cling so together. God has made it so for the purpose. You see I have been so *harried* with one thing and another botherin’, everything has gone against the stream. I reckoned so much on comin’ to you this evening. You know how hard I have worked at my cabin for our wedding. It put heart into my spade, and into the ground, and every stroke I turned. Well, when I saw my lord, though he was main kind and considerate—quite another thing from Moylan, and quite another gentleman from what I guessed him ; a real gentleman he is, that’s sure ; but no matter for that—even he said I could not stay in my cabin. He wants it real bad, and he offered me fine offers : money, and a place out over the seas ; or money if I would go away any where. It seems, do what I will, the agent must see my back out of Peterstown.”

“ It is a shame !” exclaimed Una ; “ it is a burning shame on them all ! You, who are the best man to work in the town, and the most credit out of it ! It is a shame, then, and they will be sorry when it is too late. But, oh, I ought not to speak so. Sure, our dear Saviour was treated the same, and His words were always to forgive !”

Randal stopped, and drew her to the side of the road, where a high bank, covered with moss and ferns, was crowned with a few very old twisted thorns. There they sat down.

"It was because I felt so badly that I wanted to go inside the school-gates," replied Randal. "When I hear that old clock ticking, and your little birdie's whistle, and see everything so clean and pure, and our Blessed Lady looking down on the desks, and you, my heart's darlin, like the Mether, or Angel, more like, to the childer,—the black storms which men rise up in me roll off my soul, and hate and anger, and ill-will and ill-words, and all the lave o' the world's bother, flies off along with 'em, and I feel like I used when we gathered the bog-berries out by Leugh Carra, and I made crowns of rushes for my girlen when she was a weenie, weenie, golden-haired colleen! Ah, there's some souls that must have happiness, Una, or they'll give up altogether. To-day I nearly give up myself—"

He stopped short. Strong emotion convulsed his throat, but would not have its flow. Una felt her heart pierced.

"So I thought, maybe, it was better to take my lord's offer, and go out to Australia, and begin afresh."

"To Australia!" exclaimed Una, starting; "to Australia! Ever so many thousand miles away from grandfather and grandmother, and dear Ireland? Oh, that is cruel; too, too cruel!"

"Don't speak so, don't; I can't abear it!" exclaimed Randal, on whom the sudden, irrepressible words and looks of anguish fell like molten lead.

"We are not bound to go, darlin'; no one can force us. Father Murphy will tell us what we should do."

"Yes," exclaimed Una, drawing a deep breath, as if at last there was some anchorage found in the universal storm; "yes, you say truly, Father Murphy will tell us. We will go to him. He will stand by us and make our way clear. Why should we lose our hope and be faithless now?"

"Well, *acushla*," resumed Randal, after a short pause, during which Una at least was lifting up her heart in fervent prayer, feeling and testing, as it were, the strength of God's everlasting promises to hear when His children call upon Him,—"well, I have nearly told you all. After that, as I told you, my lord spoke up so well for Australia, I said I would think of it, and talk it over a bit with you, which did not entirely please him; for he thought to get it settled there and then, and to have my word for going, to satisfy Moylan or his sister, who seems to set him on, and to hould with the agent. Poor old gentleman, sure I believe he is in a kettle of hot water often himself between the person and them two!"

"More shame for him, then!" exclaimed Una. "And so, to please them, we are to be trampled underfoot! But, no, no; it is not them as is doing it. God is over all; blessed be His holy Name!"

"Amen, then," replied Randal, earnestly. "And so, as I was worrying and fretting over what to do to-day, and whether to tell you or not, or whether to try the country myself—for I am mad as it is now,—who should I fall in with, a bit up the

mountain, where I had gone to be rid of myself and all comers, but those two spalpeens, the new otter-killer, as he says he is, and Brooker, comin' down together at a rattlin' pace. They hailed me pretty roughly, and the otter-killer began to talk big about salmon and otters lost and killed. And when I came down here (giving them but few and short words when I left 'em), here they came again, and began the same game. And Brooker taunted me as bitter as could be about your new lover that was always watchin' and follerin' you."

"A lover! My lover! Watching me!"

"Whisht awhile, *avich achree*. In the church, he said, and in the schools, and everywhere. And then, O child of my heart, may you never know what went through me when I saw you comin' down the hill with him, as easy as a glove, talkin' and laughin', and he so handsome and free!"

"Randal," said Una, gravely and earnestly, with strong but controlled emotion, "I am ashamed of you; I am ashamed and humbled. Surely you ought to be ashamed and humbled yourself. To think of taking up Brooker's words against your own,—to judge so rash and judge so wrong of me, at a distance too, and innocent of all your thoughts! Have I ever given you a cause? Have I ever thought of looking at a man but yourself, then? You should have known, you should! He, a stranger come into the parish to look over the schools, and to judge about them and the teaching. And then, not knowing the school-hours, he just comes in, and as we was both coming to the village, he asked might he just come too, and speak of the Dublin schools, and hear

about ours. Was there any wrong in that? You are not like yourself, then, now. You *ought* to have judged me true!"

These were natural and true words, gushing from a heart touched upon the dearest point. They were spoken, too, under a strong impulse of surprise. There are moments when the truth is the last thing to be spoken, for it is the last thing to be borne. It has to be held back and reserved, or altogether buried and unexpressed. Smarting under the long trial of his late life, the last few drops caused the full cup to overflow. Something clutched at Randal's throat and caught his breath. His head whirled, his eyes grew dim. He saw Una's altered, agitated face, as in a dreadful dream. Giving a kind of smothered cry of intense pain, he sprang from her side, ran down the steep bank, crossed the road and the opposite wall with a bound, and disappeared in the gathering gloom.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"More light and light!—more dark and dark our woes!"
Shakespeare.

Days drifted on; the late autumn darkened into approaching winter; and Randal was not heard of. Bitterly weeping, and reproaching herself with every kind of sin towards him, Una sought Father Murphy and his advice, or at least a word of help.

The kind old priest was sorely troubled, but not much surprised. He knew better than Una the impetuous impulsiveness of Randal's character, and the evils to which it laid him open. He comforted the poor child; sent for her every day to the presbytery to dress the altar, to rub up the brasses, to nurse and soothe Shamus, who still lay very sick; and, in short, to be as much employed and as much under his own eye as possible. He cautioned Peggy and the sacristan against "strange gentlemen," and had old Moran the mastiff unloosed. Having thus garrisoned his castle with external means, he took his oak staff and walked out to Duncarra Abbey, to consult with Father Lawrence, according to the fashion of the country. Being, as we have elsewhere said, narrow-minded and somewhat prejudiced, he had some curious old-fashioned ideas. One of these was a great reverence for the cloistered orders, and a belief that, as they had sacrificed everything to give themselves up to God, and held a good deal of converse with Him, He taught them some secrets in return. They knew more of Him, he thought, than ordinary men, and were excellent helps in prayer and intercession for their brethren in trouble. The consequence was, that after a long talk with the monk, whose sweet pale face looked more pale and transparent than ever, Father Murphy went home refreshed and comforted, and Father Lawrence got six of the other monks to join him in making a novena of prayer and penance to bring Randal back in safety, or at least to have certain news of him.

Of course this was a very blinded and supersti-

tious view of the matter, as Exeter Hall would doubtless have called it; and if it had only been made known to him, he would have written it all in two folio sheets to the secretary of the Anti-Mark of the Beast Society, as an expressive sign of the increasing darkness settling down upon Ireland.

But, my dear Exeter Hall, was not Ireland *always* a sadly popish and benighted country? and, moreover, in spite of you and your societies, is there not good chance of its remaining so to the end?

But as Una looked, with her child-like believing eyes into the spiritual world, the world where faith and hope are at home, she felt comforted exceedingly by the thought of this novena, in which she joined with all her heart, as did her grandfather and grandmother and little Martin, and it helped to lighten a burden which was near weighing her quite down.

Outward things also helped to make the time drearier. The potato crop turned out to be badly tainted with disease, which spread rapidly when the roots were stored; and the weather was colder than it had been for many years. Lowering and dark the leaden sky spread day after day over the country, and the same hollow, biting, and piercing north wind persistently blew. The helps of sunshine and little want of fuel were denied, and cold and hunger together were felt to be sorely trying to the poor.

But there were warmth and plenty in the houses of the Protestant tenants; and, alas! there were warmth and plenty also in the houses of those

who 'conformed' to the views of the Miss Powderhouse and Parson Hall, and who dutifully sent their children to my lord's schools. A Benjamin's mess of corn and meal and coals and clothing was theirs, and kept vigorous life in the body, while it brought death to the soul. It gave little gladness; for these people were too well instructed not to know what they were doing, and they shrank from the eyes of the villagers who remained faithful to their God. These were by far the larger proportion of the inhabitants, and they gathered round their dry morsel, and cowered in their fireless cabins, with brave and steadfast hearts, knowing in Whom they trusted, and looking joyfully to the end. In the spirit of the dwellers in the Catacombs and of those dens and caves spoken of by the Apostle St. Paul, these martyrs of the nineteenth century followed the footsteps of those of the first, and, like them, were ready for mockery and stripes, for bonds and prisons; ready to be stoned and sawn asunder, to be trampled and to be slain, to wander in sheepskins and goatskins in the mountains; for all this and more,—but were not ready to sacrifice one grain of incense to the idols of a false faith, or to exchange one jot of the truth for all that this world could give. They suffered, they sorrowed, and they starved in silence; and in silence looked on their children, raised their hearts to God, and died.

But not all. The martyr's crown was not, by some, so easily won. Miss Powderhouse, urged on by Moylan, and kept by him in a state of partial ignorance, but whole indignation, carried out her plan of ejectments. A good many of the

houses and a large tract of land were hers by life-interest, and with the tenants of these a beginning was made.

One bitter morning of mid-December, with sleet driving on the furious north-wind, a company of mounted police were seen slowly riding up the main street of Peterstown. Though muffled in their thick wrappers and capes, and well gloved, the men could scarcely feel their bridles, and their blue frost-bitten faces gave abundant token that, as far as they were concerned, the station-house fire would have been a pleasanter and more desirable prospect. The sergeant, however, checked some indistinct growls of disapprobation, and marshaled his band in front of a house which we may recognise. He summoned old Michael Macnamara to quit his dwelling and give up the key. The old man, whose gray-haired noble head and bent figure excited the immediate admiration and sympathy of the force, was singled out as the first victim, because Una had steadily refused to compound for the Rooneys, and had persisted in numbering them among her scholars. She had also supplied several poor families with food, to enable them to continue sending their children to school.

The old man opened the door to the sergeant.

“ Well, sir, what is my offence ? ”

“ There is no offence, Mr. Macnamara,” replied the sergeant, with involuntary respect ; “ but did you not receive a notice through Mr. Moylan’s man of business ? ”

“ I did, sir ; but I had always Lord Powderhouse’s word (the late lord) that I should live and die under this roof.”

"I am sorry, sir," replied the sergeant, "but maybe, then, you have a writing to give the agent that would satisfy him. I should be glad, I am sure."

"No, sir; more's the pity; I have no black and white for it. There are witnesses to my lord's words, but the agent will not listen to them. He says there is a new state of things, and all that is at an end. I cannot do anything, sir; I have no redress; but if I leave this roof, it must be by force. My wife is as old as myself; my grandchildren live with us. Where are we to go on such a day as this? And our dinner not eaten yet!"

He pointed to the saucepan, which was still simmering on the fire.

"I am as sorry as heart can be; more sorry than words can tell," said the sergeant, whose face proved that his words were real. "I can truly say I would sooner have gone across the sea than come here to-day. But we must obey orders, Mr. Macnamara. They tell me to eject all the tenants who have had notice and refuse to leave. Let me beg you, Mr. Macnamara. Look at my orders, sir!"

"Sir," replied the old man, calmly sitting down in his chair by the hearth, "this house was promised me by an honourable landlord, now dead and gone; and I took him at his word. I will not leave it, except by force which I cannot resist."

The sergeant took a long look, as if to gather strength for what he had to do: perhaps to realise the situation to himself. The aged patriarch, so

calm, so noble in his fine old age ; Nora, holding the suspended flax on the wheel, lifting up her sightless eyes to Heaven for strength, and in thanksgiving for the fortitude of her husband ; and little Martin, with his great dark eyes and his cheeks aflame, was pulling her sleeves, and begging her to let him take down grandfather's gun and shoot the police, one and all, on their horses. Una was at the school.

He took in all this, the clean, orderly poverty of the cabin, the little altar, and the holy prints against the wall. Then, drawing his hand across his eyes, he went out.

"There is no help for it," he said to the men.
" You must take off the roof."

Those who had been chosen for this purpose, and armed with crowbars and other instruments for the work, then began operations. They lifted the thatch, the laths, the cross-trees, and threw them on the ground, and took out one whole window at the back. A loud shout of execration burst from the now assembled crowd, and stones were lifted in many hands.

The door of the cabin opened, and Macnamara's voice was heard.

" Boys, dear friends, no violence ! God alone is my Judge, and can do with me as He wills. Come, my dear wife. We have been together in joy and happiness for many years ; we will go together in the day of sorrow and tears. Blessed be our good God, we can go with clean hands, and in the faith of our fathers !"

He took the pot of meal and potatoes off the fire, and threw the contents into the street;

gathered up the clothes which his wife had collected into a bundle ; took down the crucifix and little image of our Lady, and laid them carefully in Martin's arms ; and looking round at the walls which had sheltered them for forty years, with eyes in which grief and resolution struggled for the mastery, Michael gave his arm to Nora, and they stepped into the street. The snow drifted on them, and the winds pierced them through, as houseless and desolate, they stood a few moments to consider where to go ; but hands were stretched out on all sides to welcome and cheer them, and there was not a man in all the street that would not have gladly changed places with Michael Macnamara.

He kindly and cheerfully thanked them all ; but saying that he would prefer first going to the presbytery to consult Father Murphy, he led his wife and grandchild slowly through the crowd, and they were soon out of sight.

The key was handed to the sergeant, and the police passed on. They stopped again very soon. This was at the widow Porter's, whose reception of Miss Powderhouse, on the day of her "progress," may not be forgotten.

The widow and her seven children were again gathered round their table, eating their meal of rice and suet which Una had given the eldest girl, and shown her how to cook so as to make a more nourishing meal than the rice boiled by itself. Beside the mother lay the eighth child, the youngest boy and the mother's darling, covered with the only wrap not exchanged for food. The pet lamb of all the flock had been stricken, and, under the

stress of cold and insufficient food and clothing, was now wasted by slow fever—the peculiar fever born of famine—to a little wan and hollow-eyed skeleton.

The widow's sad but beautiful face touched the sergeant to the heart. He looked from her to the table and to the cot, and resolved, whatever it cost, that he would never again do a day's work like this.

"Mrs. Porter,—I beg your pardon, I cannot help it,—had you not a notice and a threat of ejectment from the agent?"

"I had, sir, a little time back."

"Then, my dear, good woman—excuse me—but in God's name, why could you not have been so kind as to take it, and not have forced on me this dog's trade? No, nor that either, for a dog would scorn to behave so to any man! Do you know, ma'am, you must go, or be cast out by force?"

"Sir," said the widow, turning upon him her beautiful sad eyes; "God is good, though man is not, and I have long put my trust in Him only. How could I go, sir, with seven well children into the mountains to perish, even if I had not been struck with sickness in this one?" Her voice faltered. "Now, with him, how can I go anywhere? Even wolves and tigers have some mercy."

The sergeant leaned against the wall. He was silent for some minutes, vainly trying to command his voice. At last he said,

"Mrs. Porter, if I leave this house without obeying my orders, I shall be immediately dismissed. I have children too, and no mother to look to them."

" You are right, sir ; it is not you to blame ;" replied the mother, with that calm dignity peculiar to her. " God will find some shelter for us. I will put you to no further trouble or pain. Leena darling, gather the clothes together. It is little enough we shall have to carry."

The sergeant immediately went out, and left them at liberty to take what time they chose.

They did not ask much. In a little while the door opened, and the sad procession came out into the storm ; the younger children loaded with such packages of clothes as were still left to cover them, or leading lesser ones by the hand and trying to still their cries. Last came the widow and Leena, the eldest daughter, carrying the cot with the sick boy. The mother held in her other hand a headless wooden horse, which she carried as if it were some precious thing.

As they went down the street towards a kind neighbour's cabin, who had offered them room for a night, to give a chance of looking for a shelter, the thick snow-flakes fell upon the little cot, and from the sergeant down to the least child there was not one that did not shed tears, except Mrs. Porter herself. They looked at the funeral procession of her home, she at that of her boy.

Such a procession was that which once came down from the gates of Naim, and He that met it said to the widowed mother, " Weep not." But now, though He marked it well, He kept silence and waited for the end.

The police, with openly expressed disgust and anger, went on to finish their work. They moved from house to house, as their orders pointed out,

and in some cases were met by stubborn resistance, and, alas ! also with curses, with frantic ravings of despair, and with mad blows. In some cases women met them with bitter and scornful upbraiding, with violence and insult, or with threats of future revenge. In one house the dinner of potatoes, which the sergeant begged them to finish, was violently and scornfully thrown upon the dunghill, and the famished owners went out to beg their way, exclaiming aloud that they would gladly ask alms through the world before they would yield to the landlord or the landlord's sister to sell their children's souls. In a few hours the crackling and smashing ceased ; the roofless and windowless houses gaped to the pelting sleet ; and in little trains and knots of shivering men and women sixty persons were turned out into the December storm. And thus did the Honourable Eudora Powderhouse and Malachi Moylan reap the harvest of their wills.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Then, after all was done that hand could do,
She rested." *Tennyson.*

Meanwhile Father Murphy the parish priest was daily saying his Mass for the same intention ; and Father Lawrence, at Duncarra Abbey, was praying and fasting in his cell ; for Randal had not yet been heard of, and Una, nearly heart-bro-

ken, went about her duties like a shadow, continually rebuking herself for her anger and hasty words, and gave herself no peace, making acts of reparation to win back what she thought she had never deserved to possess.

And the Masses, and the penances, and prayers went up continually, like a fragrant cloud of incense to Heaven ; but the answer was delayed, for these souls were very pleasing to God, and must needs be tried seven times in the fire.

And then one morning it came into Father Lawrence's mind at Mass to offer his life for Molina, which he did with all possible fervour, asking also that the present miserable condition of Peterstown might be changed, and that the scattered and persecuted but generous flock might have some peace.

And something warned him at his Communion that his sacrifice was accepted ; and he then left all things in God's hands, with great joy.

Throughout this time, wherever Una went, in the village or out of it, to the lake or (as she sometimes did) to the Abbey, she was met or crossed by Lefroy. Sometimes it was just a meeting, when his hat was respectfully lifted ; sometimes a kind, sympathising inquiry after her grandfather, or a little visit to him (next to Randal, the first thought and object of Una's life) ; sometimes some little service or offer of service, rendered with respect or as a matter of course ; sometimes this was urged playfully, under pretext of her being a public servant and benefactor, and in her character of school-mistress entitled to the service of all kinds of persons in return. However it might be,

under whatever colour or device, it was never bold or offensive, or even very marked. And indeed her whole mind was so absorbed and fixed upon the thought of Randal, she was so wrapped in the idea of winning him back by offices and prayers from the agonised state in which she knew he was living, that many outward things passed by her unheeded. It was with her as with those leaves which passively resist the rain, and from which the dew-drops roll off round and perfect without being able to give out any of their moisture.

One evening Una was sitting listlessly looking over the copy-books of the first class in the school-room. The door into her little sitting-room was open, and through it could be seen the bent form of old Nora, still pulling the flax from her wheel, while Michael read to her out of a New Testament which Father Fitzsimon had left him when he went away. He read a few words and then paused, as he was accustomed to do. Una listened in a dreamy kind of way, as if the words were a long way off, and conveyed no meaning to her ear.

From earliest dawn she had been awake, listening, as usual on post-days, for the postman's ringing cry, "A letter for Miss Macnamara." All through the din and buzz of the lessons one voice had sounded in her ears, one face seemed to haunt and stand in her way. The low cry of pain and agony wrung from Randal that last evening seemed to be reëchoed, his wild beseeching glance to be cast on her again, and to wring her heart till she could scarcely control her words, or cease from clasping her throbbing temples with her hands.

Why had she so recklessly increased his pain ?

Why had she not better read his mind, and weighed the sufferings he had so long borne? Why did she press upon the deep wound? Oh, if she could but see him once more; once cast herself on the ground at his feet, and beseech him to forgive her and to forget her pride! How did Blessed Mary behave when St. Joseph was troubled about her? Did *she* rise up and murmur, and speak haughtily to him in return? Oh, blind, blind, besotted and blind, not sooner to have considered this! And then, for the ten thousandth time, did Una inwardly abase herself to the very dust before God, confessing that every thing He had brought upon her was just and right, and that she deserved to suffer still more; and then she besought Him to take back Randal into His own keeping, for she was unworthy to have the charge.

Then the words sounding in the little room seemed to become more distinct and near, for Michael's grand old voice, untouched by the weight of eighty years, was like a deep-toned bell, and it was only the pressure of her own wretchedness which had shut it out before. He had finished finding and reading the gospel of the last Sunday, and had returned to some favourite passages, which Father Fitzsimon had marked for him to think over and over again. This was what Una heard:

“And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each; and every several gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

“And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord

God Almighty is the Temple thereof, and the Lamb.

"And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

There was a pause, and some low, delighted comments from old Nora, which Una did not hear. Her soothed thoughts followed the glorious vision, and rested in that City whose Builder and Maker is God Himself. She dwelt on the concluding words :

"The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

"And they shall see His face ; and His Name shall be on their foreheads.

"And night shall be no more ; and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

"What does it matter if I lose everything in this world ? I have been base and earthly ; my heart has been given to a creature. Perhaps, O my God, that is why Thou hast taken him from me !"

This was Una's last evening thought. A great hush seemed to have settled down on her weary heart ; and it was at rest. She dreamt that she was walking on the golden pavement of the Eternal City of God, and that she met Randal, his face radiant with heavenly joy. But he waved his hand, and said, "Not yet ; we cannot be together for a time !" And while trying to catch hold of

his hand to hear more, Una cried out and awoke. Was Randal, then, dead and in Heaven? She scarcely could believe that. No; it was only a dream. But still, in spite of doubt and suspense, Una felt happier, and could rest now in submissive hope.

It will be evident to all, that Michael and Nora Macnamara, with little Martin, were now settled in the schoolmistress's house, next the school. Father Murphy had managed this with the help of a wooden partition or two, and lent beds. So far, the Macnamaras were not driven away from the village, and Martin had not been given as a prey to Exeter Hall.

But in several other cases the poor victims of mistaken zeal, or martyrs to the ancient faith (according to the view taken) did not fare so well. There was no granddaughter in office for them to fly to, nor were the kind neighbours' cabins as plastic as their hearts and wills. In every other case of ejectment a fresh settlement had had to be made, and this in the depth of winter, and the dearest time of fuel and food. Widow Porter's sick child died, having been hurried from roof to roof; and not only he, but two of his young sisters, already undermined by scanty food, followed him to their rest under the snow-covered sod. The widow and her five remaining little ones went into a suburb of Duncarra, where they hired a miserable room for the rest of the winter, barely keeping themselves by scutching and carding flax.

Also of these eight scholars Exeter Hall reaped not one.

But from other cast down and destitute parents he took a tithe of souls. All had not the courage to hold their starving children on their knees, and see life ebbing from them drop by drop. All could not stand the sharp cry or moaning wail for bread which they could not supply. Some said, "The poor things would take no harm for a bit, just through the worst of the cold." "They should stop their ears over the Catechism, and let the others answer, till a good time came round again. God Almighty would take it easy on them, looking at the cold and want." So here and there knots of Catholic children went ragged and barefoot to the parson's school, where they received shoes and frocks and soup in plenty, and were warmed and filled. Thus, as we have said, did Exeter Hall take his tithe of souls.

But while the wolves prowled and fed, the good shepherd watched the poor flock, and when he saw what was doing, Father Murphy prayed and thought with streaming eyes; and one Monday morning, after Mass, sent messengers from house to house, bidding every one be present at the Rosary and Benediction on the following Sunday, when he should have something especial to say to all.

On the Saturday, while the "Catechism children" were busy posing one another triumphantly with frightfully intricate theological and scriptural questions, the buzz was hushed by the appearance of a well-known shadow on the window blind, and Una was informed that Father Murphy was coming to the school. Her pale face lightened with the only joyful look that came upon it now, and

she left the class to meet him at the door. He gave her his blessing with a shade more of tender care than usual, and said, "No news, my child? Well, well, we shall be patient, and wait upon the Will of God! Blessed be He, who knows our good!"

"I want to give you some work, my child," he continued, after hearing the heartfelt "Amen," which is the usual and sincere Irish response to the reverent praise of God's Name. "You may bring the girls to the sacristy after I have told you what to do."

"That is delightful!" replied Una, with her faint smile. "Shall I make proclamation now?"

"Not until I have finished my say, or I shall be drowned out of it," said the old priest smiling. "I am going to have a grand Benediction on Sunday night, and to speak to all the people about the school work that is going on; and to make them all promise to die rather than sell their children's souls. You are not to breathe a word of this till it is all over. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Father; I understand."

"So I want my church *beautiful*," continued the old man, glad to interest poor Una in anything; "and to be dressed out with flowers, and green, and garlands. You will find all the stuff, and plenty of string in the sacristy; so you may go and set to work as hard as you please. And pray, while you work, my colleen, that my poor words may be blessed by God, and that *He* may put strength into our people's hearts, and make them stand firm."

He paused a moment, and then added, in a

low, tender voice, like that of a mother to a very little child,

"And do you, my *colleen dhas*, lay your wounds in the Heart of our dear Lord, and ask Him to do whatever He likes with you and all you love."

Una scarcely seemed to breathe. She thought again of her dream, and of the feeling that she ought to renounce her love, and everything, to God's further will. Again there was the same thought—sacrifice, sacrifice! Yes, she was constrained to accept and to renew again the desire. She was ready. She looked up at the priest, and was deeply touched to see his mild eyes full of tears for her. How long she had known him! How deeply she loved that mild, venerable face, to her quite beautiful in its charity and lovingkindness! But all she said was :

"Thank you, Father; I will."

He then gave the children his usual blessing, and left the school.

"Children," said the clear voice of the mistress, "what do you think we are going to do?"

"O ma'am, O mistress, please tell us!"

"We are going into the sacristy to help decorate the church for Father Murphy: you are to make garlands with boughs and string, and hang them about the sanctuary and windows."

The children looked at one another with a swift glance of bright pleasure, and then, with one common impulse, clapped their hands, and that not satisfying their wishes, they leant forward and pounded on the desks with quick-beating doubled fists.

Una smiled, but held up her hand, and there was instant silence.

"There are two conditions, remember: one is, that you do not talk or laugh too loud, as our dear Lord will be very near to us; the other is, that you say the beads for Father Murphy's intention. Do you all agree?"

Every hand was lifted high above their heads, and then they knelt to say the *Angelus*, and filed out of the desks to put on their bonnets and cloaks, leaving the room quite empty except of the dancing sunshine on the floor.

CHAPTER XX.

"In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter." *Tennyson.*

On their way to the church they met Lefroy. He raised his hat, smiling and nodding to the girls, whose good will and word he had taken care to win by various popular acts and ways. Then stopping Una respectfully he said,

"Miss Macnamara, I should be glad to have a word with you any time you can make it convenient."

Una looked surprised.

"My time is usually taken up, Mr. Lefroy. Could you not mention now what you have to say?"

"Your time is too much taken up," replied Lefroy more warmly than he intended. "You are over-tasking your strength, and making every one else miserable."

"Excuse me," said Una coldly, endeavouring to pass on; "I must go after the children to the sacristy."

"Well then, you must hear it roughly told," exclaimed Lefroy, indignant and chafed. "I think you might have known that I would gladly have spared you the pain; but it is your own choosing entirely."

A momentary idea flashed across Una's mind.

"Have you any *bad* news for me, Mr. Lefroy?"

"I don't call it so," he replied sullenly; "but you will, I am afraid. Mind, I would have told you more gently."

"No matter, no matter; tell me now—tell me *at once!*" pleaded Una, clasping her hands convulsively over her heart.

Lefroy hesitated a moment, or seemed to do so; then taking out a letter, he said,

"I think young Molina has enlisted."

Una in vain tried to repress her violent start.

"What makes you say so?" she uttered, in a clear, strange voice.

"I have had this letter," he replied; "you can read it. It is from a friend of mine, an officer at Cork. Read it, and keep it as long as you like. I am sorry to give you the pain."

But somehow Una was gone, and the letter too. She seemed to walk on the air, so swiftly, so noiselessly had she grasped the letter and vanished.

And she, all through the village-street, was clasping the letter as if it decided her lot, and was murmuring, half aloud, "O Mary, sweetest! Mother of Sorrows! Mother, pierced with a sword! speak for us to thy Son; speak a good word for me and for *him*; pray for us, who never forgot thy children, that some comfort may keep me from giving way!"

Yet Una set all the children to work. There were the greens and the string, and there were the flowers to insert and mix at intervals. The wreaths were to be so long, and the garlands to hang at such lengths between. They were first to begin by repeating the Rosary as they worked, and afterwards they might talk. Such and such girls were to do the Sanctuary, and such others the garlands for the windows and pillars. Then she went into the church, and after a minute's fervent but still bewildered prayer, opened and read the letter. There could be no mistake about it. It was dated "Cork;" and after giving a brief, graphic account of the preparations for the transit of the troops to China, it came to the subject mentioned by Lefroy. These were the words:

"And now, old fellow, for your own letter. I am truly interested in your Chronicles of Peters-town. By Jove, I'm half in love with the pretty schoolmistress myself! And, do you know, I think the missing lover has strayed into this port, and, like other malcontents, taken refuge in the red coat! Last night a strapping young fellow, six feet odd, was brought in by a sergeant, who had persuaded him to enlist. He was cer-

tainly handsome, and one of the finest-built fellows I ever saw. His name was given as Mullins, or Molina, or some such thing. Is that it at all? He was pale and gaunt with hunger or wretchedness; but nothing would make him say where he came from. So ends your romance, which, it seems, is to be divided between us," &c.

She folded it up, and put it from her on a bench. The words seemed to scorch and burn her brain. Was it possible that Randal could have been so thoughtlessly, selfishly mad as to leave her for life without a word? Had the cloud which had come down upon him been indeed the work of Satan, to banish all grace and hope, and drag him into reckless despair? Were her future, her once-bright future, her home-life, her years of wedded happiness, blotted out for ever?

"O Randal, my heart's life, could you have been so cruel—so cruel to me, your own girl?"

She bowed her head, and burst into a rush of sobs and tears. Her very heart seemed to lie on the pavement, and to pour itself out and die.

The strain had been too long and too great, and this outburst was needed. After a while it was checked as by a ray of light.

"Is the heart of man sufficient to man? If earthly love and joy be torn from it, can it in very truth destroy its real peace? Weigh it in the scales and judge."

Whence came this clear inward voice? Una raised her head, and looked towards the Tabernacle. The calm, undying lamp seemed to draw her heart towards the Dweller therein; surely that was truth. She, or something within her, seemed to

follow out the thought: "The heart may be cruelly wrung, but be healed again. It may bleed, but live afterwards to know a deeper and holier peace."

She looked again at the red glow of the faithful lamp, which seemed to watch, while men were forgetful or absent, before the Face of God. She got up, and went to her own favourite corner, between the high altar and the chapel of the Blessed Virgin, and there knelt and buried her face in her hands. Childlike and free in her dealings with God, she was accustomed to find Him also free in dealing with her. When she sought Him in prayer, she quickly found what she sought, and spent hours in sitting at His feet, both "hearing and asking questions," as to her dearest and most faithful Friend. And now, as she knelt there, pouring out her whole heart and soul before His throne, giving up herself and every thing she loved and valued into His hands, she found, even more than usually, that He poured wine and oil into her wounds, and in the clear, low, stillest Voice in which He speaks to His beloved, He made known to her some secrets of His will.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I am in so far—that sin will pluck on sin."
Shakespeare.

"Well, what is going on? Did the letter meet with credit?"

"Swallowed like Gospel. But I would not try that again for many a pound."

Moylan looked at the speaker with his most expressive sneer.

"What! Have you grown to be such a soft? I thought it of you all along. Don't you *want* the girl, then, after all the bother?"

Malone set his strong teeth, and looked at the agent with undisguised hatred and disgust.

"Mr. Moylan, you are a heartless devil!"

Then, remembering how he was hampered and tied, he ground his great teeth, and clenched his hair with both hands, cursing his own folly in being led on by such a man.

Moylan looked at him as a cool keeper in a lunatic asylum looks at the pranks of a patient.

"Growing rusty," he said, in a low clear voice.

"H'm! Best not, fool! best not."

"Mr. Moylan, sir, I beg, I *entreat* you, sir, do not drive it too far. The look in that girl's eyes would even have stopped *you*. Her heart is broken—and we have done it."

"Ah, I see," replied Moylan, still sneering, but in a more covert way. "I beg your pardon, Ma-

lone ; I really could not make out your drift. Of course a girl will feel about her lover. They all do till they find a fresh one. When she feels sure that Molina is out of the question, then you will step in, and set all right. You won't regret the clever dodge of the letter from Cork then."

"I don't know that," said Malone bitterly, as he remembered and contrasted Una's manner with Randal and with himself. "She loves that fellow better than life ; and as to me—well, I love *her* better than life ; that's certain sure ! She makes me altogether different, and I don't sometimes know what I am doing—that's the truth ! You may laugh, sir ; but you will not laugh in the end!"

"My good fellow, you are hot, and I am cool, that's all. Don't get so stuffy about it. Love is witching madness, you know ; and I am not in love, and you are. I really did not know you were so fairly in for it, as I have been away these few days, and things get on so fast. Now we will take it up seriously, and finish it out. In the first place, where the devil *is* Molina ?"

"Where he is now, I can't exactly say ; but he *was* in Duncarra only yesterday, where Coolin dogged him out of the mountains."

"Duncarra !" echoed Moylan, white as chalk, and slightly stamping his foot. "And why didn't that fool and ass Coolin stick a knife in him, or lend him a bullet, before he got there to drop through all our plans ?"

Malone measured him an instant with his eye.
"You said distinctly there was to be *no violence*,"

he replied ; " and I was to be witness of your words."

Moylan tried to fix his steely eyes upon him, and to sneer him down. But he blenched before him, and turning on his heel, cursed him under his breath with a hideous curse, and flung himself towards the window, from which he looked out for a few minutes as if to recover breath and thought. He then turned, and opening a cupboard, took from it a stone bottle, a jug, sugar, glasses, and spoons, and proceeded to brew a stiff noggin of punch from a small kettle on the hob. He set it on the table, and poured out a tumbler for Malone, and another for himself. Then he said,

" Malone, you are an ass, and Coolin is another ! But never mind. Who ever heard before of a Connaught ranger sparing his enemy, or choosing his rival's happiness to his own ? You must have been reared on sheep's milk by mistake. Now look here : will you, or will you not, carry off Una immediately, and take her to New York, where you may live in any kind of fool's paradise you please ? Molina, you say, was in Duncarra yesterday ; so he will probably be in Peterstown to day, if he be not here hidden already. The first thing, he will want to find out by stealth if Una is true to him or not ; and, if possible, he must not find her at all. She must have sailed out of the harbour with you by her side. But if this is *impossible*, (he will go first to the schoolhouse), could you not be there, and let him surprise you talking to his love ?"

Malone's eyes flashed.

" I will be there !" He thought a moment, and

then said, "Molina had a sort of bird-call, with which he used to let her know he was come. Then she used to start out and speak to him at the little gate."

"Ha! do you think you could act the romancer, and make the bird-call yourself?"

"I think I could, sir; there are few birds or beasts I could not imitate; and I have taught many a one to Shamus the innocent."

"Well, so far so good. But we must have Coolin at hand. Molina is a young giant. It will take all Coolin's strength to hold him, or cut him down. Besides, there might be others in the schoolhouse."

"The priest is often there of an evening," said Malone.

Moylan started, and fixed his eyes keenly upon him; but Malone was absorbed in his own share of the plot, and had only spoken it as a fact. Moylan's hand shook as he raised his glass and drained it to the bottom.

"Well," he exclaimed, "your first business is to find Coolin and bring him to me. I think we shall make out this little plan, and then you will be happy. There are two American ships now in port, and one, I know, is to sail directly. I will start a trusty messenger myself to Westport, and take three berths. You can all get to New York together, and then let Coolin take his own way. You and Una can make a handsome settlement with the money I shall give you, and you may begin afresh, and be as happy as the day is long."

Malone's head swam. Now that his tremendous passions were fairly roused, he realised the force

of the temptation and the power of the tempter. Whatever struggles he had lately made, whatever dim and doubtful feelings had sprung out of a conscience not wholly dead, whatever yearnings after a better and higher course had gleamed and glowed within him,—were all now cast aside. The visions of a home, of wealth, of pleasure, and the rapturous possession of Una's love,—for love him she must, she *should*,—poured like a flood-tide across the writings drawn in the sand, and swept them utterly away. He stretched his hand eagerly across the table, and grasped Moylan's with a convulsive force.

" You are right, sir ; I was a cowardly fool ! I am ready and determined for all. I thank you from my very heart ! "

" That is well spoken, like a man," replied the agent, whose face was cool but perfectly pale. " Now go you and find Coolin, or get him found. As he is by way of being an otter-hunter now, you will most likely meet with him in Ballyshin Reach, just above the last bridge beyond the village. And remember, Malone, every thing depends on Molina's being *well secured*. Out of the country, or under-ground,—whichever it is, all depends on his being silenced. You understand me. Now go."

Malone went, and the agent sat perfectly still. The ticking of the little clock on the chimney-piece seemed to pierce his ear at every sound. Should it or should it not be done ? Yes ; there was no safety or peace without. Yes ; all doubt was gone. The priest must die.

The clock struck its silvery little chime. Moylan went out, like Judas, to do his master's bidding.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,—
Are touched, are turned, to finest air."

Tennyson.

It was true that Molina was at Duncarra. He had wandered about in a kind of moody and passionate madness, first going to Westport to inquire about ships; then, finding it impossible to engage himself without letting Una know—impossible also to write, and more impossible to leave the country without another glimpse of her dear face, however it might be—he had wandered through several neighbouring towns, and finally to Ballina, where he had made inquiries about work of various kinds; and being by this time in a more ordinary and rational mood, and able to listen and think, he asked carefully about service and work from the different shops, thinking that perhaps the life and occupation of a town might suit him better than returning to try and rent land. He had actually found mill work at good wages for the time being, and a place where Una could live, if indeed she was still willing to fulfil her engagement with one who had proved so reck-

less and impulsive, and had inflicted upon her such bitter pain. Randal was now fully sensible of the madness of his conduct in leaving her while under the influence of his jealous frenzy ; but he still thought, having done so, it would be wiser to have something definite to propose, and some time of possibility for their marriage and for leaving Peterstown.

Feeling and arguing like a man, Randal forgot that while he had been rushing here and there, actively busy, and absorbed in a definite search, with hope for the future, Una had been deserted, and heart-sick with suspense and agonies of doubt, not knowing if he were safe, or even alive. Thus will a man unwittingly pierce a faithful heart with wounds which time can scarcely heal, and then expect that everything should be forgotten in a few minutes.

However, in a softened and sounder mood he had sought Father Lawrence at the Abbey, and made a hearty and full confession of two months back. And while with wet eyes and humbled heart he was still making his thanksgiving after the sacrament, a hand was laid upon his shoulder, and he saw Father Murphy's face bent down towards him, meek and thankful as usual, but with his eyes filled with tears. Randal buried his own then in his hands for a moment; but immediately got up and followed the good old priest into the sacristy.

"Now, sir, what am I to call you ?" exclaimed the parish priest, holding him fast, as if to prevent his escaping any more. "What are you, then, a lost sheep or a found ?"

Randal fell on his knees.

"O Father Murphy, dear Father Murphy, do forgive me my mad folly ! I know I am a disgrace to you ; but do not give me up."

"And what are you to Una?" replied the priest. "Randal, you have nearly been the death of the best, the very best and dearest—"

He stopped, for he could not say any more.

"Oh, I know, I know ! I am not worthy of her ! I never *was* worthy, even to kiss her shoes !" exclaimed Randal, clasping his hands. "I was mad, wicked, wild, when I left her ; but, O Father, if I had not, I should have taken the blood of that strange man, Lefroy. I know I should. And I misdoubt all the while if he is what he calls himself. I am sure there is some plot in it, for I heard at Westport and at Ballina, that it is said two convicts have come back from over the seas, and a great reward is offered ; and my mind misgave me from the first, I had seen Lefroy's face before."

"Ha !" said the priest, "can that be what Shamus meant in his sickness, crying out against the wolf ? The dear little lad would scarce ever leave Una's side, especially if she went out of the village, and would take old Moran too, who, you know, would have made no bones of tearing any one up that offered to touch her. But Randal, Randal child, you should have written her a word of token !"

"Father," replied Molina, sitting down on the confessional stool at the priest's feet, "I hate myself more than I can tell you. My eyes were shut by want of faith, by anger, and by my own pas-

sions, every way. And after I had left, and was come a bit to myself, I found that I had been really very ill in body too. I had a kind of fever in the head, and was nursed up on the mountain by a good old decent woman who has a little cabin in the wildest parts of Cahir-na-Duigan. So after she let me go—and 'twas weak I was in truth—I found that weeks were gone by, while I could take no heed; and then I foolishly thought I would not go back to Peterstown with an empty hand, but with something for Una and me to look to, and ever since I have sought work till I found such as suited us both."

"And you have found it, then?"

"Yes, Father, better than I deserved. I had already found something for myself; but when I come here, Father Lawrence told me I might have their mill work under Father Joseph, which is a greater and better prospect than I could ever have looked for. So now I cannot say what I feel: home—and rest—and Una—at peace—"

His voice had been shaken during the last sentences, and here he fairly broke down, and burst into tears, in which Father Murphy joined.

"My child," he said, as soon as he could speak, "bless God this day for His exceeding goodness. He is indeed the Good Shepherd, and has watched over you when you left Him and forgot His love. Never again let a moment's mistrust of Him cross your mind. Stay here a bit and finish your prayers, while I find Father Lawrence, and say a word to him, and then we will go home together. I too must thank God with my whole heart; for I have found my sheep that was lost."

After kneeling for a little while in the church, the parish priest left Randal there, and went into the Abbey. Having asked to see Father Lawrence, he was surprised to be greeted by another, who came into the parlour in his stead.

"Father Fitzsimon ! I did not know you were here. Can I see Father Lawrence, do you know ?"

" You may see him in his cell."

" How ? What ? He is not so ill !"

" He is well, most well," replied the Father, with his calm, sad smile ; " nothing can ever be otherwise with Lawrence. Will you come ?"

Scarcely able to bear or even understand this sudden blow, the probable loss of his dear confessor and best friend, the parish priest followed the tall but bent figure that led silently through the cloisters. On the way he paused to look through the arched doorway leading to the garden, where he had so often sat and talked with his brother. The green turf and the imperishable yew walls were just the same ; the old sun-dial still cast the shadow of time on its disc ; and the glories of the autumn flowers were but replaced by the delicate colours and pure white of spring.

" It is well, it is well," murmured the Father to himself. " Death is indeed swallowed up in victory. It *was* death, but the resurrection has followed with everlasting life."

He went on, and they reached Father Lawrence's cell. The monk lay upon his poor bed, looking like a shadow even of his former self ; but with a face so sweet, so calm, so unearthly in its readiness for the last message, that even grief

was hushed and elevated in his presence, and turned into joyful thanksgiving at having seen and had intercourse with so manifest a servant of God.

He smiled faintly, and held out his thin hand to the parish priest.

Father Murphy knelt beside him and kissed it, and then, in a few words, spoke of Randal and his return. A glorious, radiant glow of thanksgiving and praise lit up the face of the monk.

"Yes," he said, "the sheep that was lost is found. He shall never be lost again. He is safe, blessed be God for ever ! '*Non moriar, sed vivam, et narrabo opera Domini !*' "^{*}

Then did Father Fitzsimon wonderingly recall the words his brother had once before spoken of Randal :

"He may be fearfully tried, he may go through cruel sufferings, he may lose all the happiness that life seems now to offer him,—life itself may be cut short in its prime; but that soul will not be lost."

Was the rest also to be fulfilled ? As he leant against the wall at the foot of the bed, looking alternately at the monk and at the crucifix and sharp discipline hung over his head, he felt what had been the prayer and the offering, and called to mind and put together other rare and disjointed words, which now filled up the evidence to his mind. He knew now the meaning of the words,

* "I shall not die, but live, and show forth the works of the Lord!"

used lately in a moment of thanksgiving. "The sacrifice is accepted ; the shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Lawrence was to die, that Molina might be saved from despair and ruin. Oh, love, strong, and stronger than death ! oh, mystery of the intercession of God's anointed priests ! Could he for one instant regret ? could he feel anything but exulting joy ?

And while these thoughts absorbed his mind, Father Murphy had bade the monk farewell, and the brothers were left together.

" '*Lætare, lætare, in Domino. Magnificat anima mea in Domino.*' Let us rejoice together, Cyprian ; let our last intercourse be full of praise."

Father Fitzsimon looked at his vanishing jewel. It was all that he had on earth ; and both for his own sake and for its use had been unspeakably precious to him. But, like St. Francis of Sales, his daily prayer had long been that every thread of his heart might be marked with the cross.

" Is there anything you particularly wish to say, Lawrence ?"

" Yes," replied the monk, after a short pause. " There is one thing, Cyprian, that I have never told you."

" Let me hear it now. Anything I can do, let me know at once."

" It has been my continual prayer for some time," replied the monk, " though I scarcely know why, that you may grow in strength, and make some greater sacrifice than has yet been made."

Father Fitzsimon started a little; but his dark, calm face was immoveable.

"I do not see, I have not at all known, what this sacrifice is to be," continued the monk, in his clear, thin voice, which at times was now interrupted by failing strength; "but I think *you* will see it, and joyfully accept it, whatever it may be. I have prayed for you to see it, and I think you will not refuse it when the time comes."

"I shall not refuse," repeated the low, earnest voice beside him.

"How can any one refuse what God asks?" replied the monk, forcing a passage for his words. "It is such a privilege when God bends down to us from His throne, and puts His will into our hands. It shows us what we are when we stop our ears and will not hear, or wilfully close our eyes to the highest teaching. Blind! blind! Oh, just now, when I was reading of our Lord healing the blind man with clay, what deep meaning seemed to lie hidden in the simple words of Scripture: 'That Man, that is called Jesus, made clay and anointed my eyes, and said to me: Go to the Pool of Siloe, and wash. And I went, I washed, and I see.' That Man, called Jesus, be my sole Friend and Physician! Let all others, whether Pharisees or Apostles, now stand aside. They cannot enter into the sight or blindness of my soul. They cannot interpret His Words, nor heal my wounds. 'That Man' only can make clay of the humiliations of His own choosing. In secret and alone He will prepare me a cure, and with His help I shall come out in triumph at His Right Hand. 'I went, I washed, and I see.' O Sacred Heart of my God! O Love, beyond all power of loving in return! When shall I be with Thee, and at rest?"

He closed his eyes, and seemed already rapt into some glimpse of the Beatific Vision.

“ *Quis non amantem redamet?*
Quis non redemptus diligit?”

repeated Father Fitzsimon softly. After a little pause he added, as if to himself,

“ *Expertus potest credere,*
Quid sit Iesum diligere.”

He stooped down, and gently kissed the monk's pale transparent cheek.

“ Fare you well now, dear Lawrence; my time is up. Good bye, till I see you again.”

The monk held his hand, softly repeating, “ Till I see you again!” then said, “ Well, then, give me a blessing, Cyprian. I must really have one to-night.”

A slight flush crossed the dark face of the priest. His eyes seemed to shine with tears. But, after a moment's struggle, he said, in his calmest voice,

“ *Benedicat te, omnipotens Deus; Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus. Amen.*”

He still held his brother's hand; and, as he had done once before in the garden, gave one deep glance around that took in the whole scene. He noted the narrow cell, the pleasant ivy-circled window, through which were seen the purple mountains, the fading spring twilight, and the silvery crescent moon, even now casting a faint beam upon the pallet-couch, the crucifix, and the wasted sweetest face that lay beneath it.

Then he touched the thin hand he held with his lips, and left the cell. And those two saw one another on earth no more.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"The tidal wave of deeper souls
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares."

Longfellow.

The Sunday for which the children had been decking the church came in its course. Never was anything prettier than it looked in its wreaths of greens and dahlias, while long streamers of passion flower, put up by Una at the last moment, hung round the sanctuary and over the tabernacle. Several banners of the Passion, the Sacred Heart, and our Lady of Sorrows, to whom Father Murphy had a special devotion, stood on each side of the altar; and the whole church wore an aspect of unusual solemnity and preparation for some marked event.

Towards evening groups and knots of the country people began to flow in, and increasing continually, the tide filled the little church completely. The messengers had done their work well. More and more poured in; there seemed no end to the flow, or to the elastic comprehension of the church. At last it was full; it was crammed; it was suffo-

cating ; and the rear of the congregation streamed thickly out in the churchyard, under the old thorn-trees, and among the graves. Every window was wide open, so I do not know but that they had some of the best places.

The bells rang out, and every mind was fixed upon what Father Murphy had gathered them for. There had not been such a meeting—no, not for forty years, under good old Father Mike—God rest his soul !—when the soupers first came to the west. They would warrant Father Paul had as good words to say to them now. Glory be to God, they had surely a fine pastor, and fine words could he give out to them ! Och, and did not he give Paty Connor an iligant taste of his oak stick, then, the other day, for not comin' to his Michaelmas duties, and gettin' drunk out on the spree ! May God bless him for ever ! He was the very *moral* of a fine priest—*as stiff as a bull in a gate*, and not to be turned for any man ! These and many other such murmured communications, mingled with prayers and rockings to and fro, were passed up and down from many a broad-frilled, snow-white cap, and scarlet handkerchief, and frieze coat with the sleeves tied behind. But the bells ceased, and then a long, deep, but softly-breathed “whisht” ran through the expecting people, and there was immediately a silence that could be felt.

Father Murphy stood at the altar in his alb and stole. He made the sign of the cross slowly and solemnly, and then began to speak. His voice was rich and strong, and poured out so easily through the windows as to be clearly heard to the

farthest confines of the churchyard. He told the people in clear, common words that he had thought it well to call them together that night to speak of the state of the village and the surrounding country, and of their own souls. They had a good landlord, an excellent man he might say ; but his ears were filled with idle tales, and he seldom saw his own tenants. Men who were prejudiced against the faith, *because they did not know it*, represented matters to him in a way contrary to the truth, and he believed what they said. There was but one cure for this—they must pray for their landlord. He was sorry to find and to see that they had not done this, and some of them had indulged evil and bitter feelings against him. He would not name them now, but he knew them all. Others had given a noble example of forgiveness, and they would have a blessing for it. From this very night they must all promise him to pray for their landlord every day. That was one thing he had to say to them.

Another was that some of them had acted worse than these. They had given in to temptation, and had sent their children, or allowed them to be taken, to the parson's school. They had not accepted the sufferings sent them by God ; they had not borne with hunger and cold ; but they had sold their children's souls for coals, and soup, and bread. If those who tempted them were justly called "soupers," what kind of name did these deserve but "soupers' slaves"? Poor, miserable, cowardly slaves, forgetting the life to come, and the beautiful courts of Heaven, and the crown of stars on our Lady's head, and the glorious Face of

God, which was to be their everlasting reward ; forgetting all this, and their own eternal glory, for a mouthful of bread and a stitch of rags ! But he knew they had only forgotten themselves through trouble. They had turned their back on Almighty God for awhile, but they were now ready to return. They would not cast themselves out and sell themselves to the devil for ever. He then, in the most powerful though rough way, drew a sketch of bygone times, and carried them all back, as he seemed to see it himself, to be eyewitnesses of what their forefathers had gone through for the faith. How during the "Hag's War,"—when all that country had been laid desolate by Elizabeth's lieutenants, every farm a heap of smoking ruins, every village a street of empty roofless shells, every road strewed with dead horses, cows, and sheep, and with the bodies of those who were ploughing their land or tending their flocks—death and destruction had filled the whole province ; but where were the souls of those who died ? They were gone up with their martyrs' crowns ; they were kneeling round the crystal sea with palms in their hands for ever.

And so, when Cromwell's soldiers had swept the country, and, having killed the last of the O'Brian Blakes, had quartered themselves in the old court, well did they know the tradition that the deep pool of Cahir-na-Duigan was then red as blood from the bodies that were thrown into it, and that from that time to this, it is said no beast will drink of it, even on the hottest summer day. Those bodies were the congregation gathered in St. Malachi of the Rocks, when the soldiers came

and surrounded the chapel, and killed the priest, and every man, woman, and child, there worshiping their God. But they were no "soupers." The mothers smiled when they saw their children butchered. They were true Irishwomen, and rejoiced to die for the ancient faith. And it was the same again and again—not many years beyond their memory—when the Orangemen first rose up, and began to search and imprison the Catholics wherever they pleased ; and the triangle was set up in every town, and poor Catholics were flogged to death because they would not renounce their religion. There was not a Catholic whose life was safe ; not one whose house was sacred, or whose goods were not a prey to the spoiler. But how many of them bought his safety at the price of his soul ? But one ; but one. Out of all the names recorded, there was but *one* who went back and renounced his God. These were true Irishmen, worthy of the name. These were the forefathers, what would they say to their faithless, degenerate children ? And what would *God say to them*, but the one terrible word, "Depart ! Depart from Me, ye doubly cursed ; cursed in this world by the Church, and in the next before all men and angels. Depart from Me for all eternity ! You have chosen the devil ; let him be your portion for ever !"

At these words the feelings of the people, which had been raised to the highest pitch by the forcible sketches of past times and glories, towards which the Irishman looks back with a tender and half-sad, half-exulting regret, now burst beyond their control. A shivering sound of sobs and

groans ran through the whole crowd ; and they all fell on their knees, beating their breasts and kissing the earth. Those especially, like the Sweeneys, Peter Rooney, and others, who had yielded to the storm, and sent their children to Mr. Hall's school, were completely broken down by grief and horror at their present position.

Father Murphy saw that there was no resistance of will. He raised his hand, and, turning to the Tabernacle, he promised our Lord, there present in the Blessed Sacrament, that His strayed sheep should return to their duty. He touchingly reminded Him of His long-suffering and mercy, and of His promise that all who repented should be pardoned by Him. And then he went down from the altar steps, and vested for Benediction. The altar blazed with its myriad lights, the organ played softly, and the children of the choir, with Una, sang a few verses of a simple hymn. It was one they much loved to sing and hear, and which is not enough known :

TO OUR LADY OF SORROWS.

O Mother, most afflicted,
Standing beneath that tree,
Where Jesus stands rejected,
On the hill of Calvary !

Chorus. O Mary, sweetest Mother,
We love and pity thee ;
And for the sake of Jesus,
Let us thy children be !

Thy heart is well-nigh breaking,
Thy Jesus thus to see,
Insulted, wounded, dying,
In greatest agony.

Chorus. O Mary, sweetest Mother, &c.

When the Blessed Sacrament had been exposed high above the altar, Father Murphy turned again to the weeping and praying people. He bade them, every one who was there present,—women and children as well as men,—raise his right hand, and promise solemnly that night to God never again, for the love or fear of anything whatever, to tamper with his faith, or to countenance any other in doing so. Thus, and thus only, would he be justified in admitting them to the Sacraments, or could they find prosperity or peace.

It was a wonderful and a beautiful sight. Instantly, both inside the crowded church and outside to the very boundary-walls, every head was raised, and every right hand lifted high above their heads. Then, with streaming eyes fixed on the Mystic Face of their God, did every creature present clearly and solemnly follow the words of the priest, and vow to be henceforth loyal and true.

“Come trouble and want, come sickness or famine, come persecution and beggary of all, I will truly practise the Catholic faith, and renounce all dealings with every false religion. So help me, my God !”

And He heard their vow, and blessed them from His throne.

There was not one among all that bowed and hushed multitude who did not turn to God that night with all his heart. The chains fell off them,

and their bonds were broken ; and from that hour there was no more tyranny that could hurt those souls. “ Souping ” in Peterstown came to an end, and Una had enough to do with her full school and ignorant scholars to deaden the sting of her grief for the time.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ All was ended now,—the hope, and the fear, and the sorrow ;
All the aching of heart, the restless, unsatisfied longing ;
All the dull deep pain, and constant anguish of patience.”

Longfellow.

At the conclusion of the interview with Father Lawrence, the parish-priest and Randal, after a long talk with Father Joseph, and a review of the mill and the work required to be done in it, made the best of their way along the lake-side towards Peterstown. The spring twilight was faded now, and it grew rapidly dark ; but as the shadows deepened their lengthened talk seemed to become more and more pleasant, as, after the fullest details of his late miserable wanderings, Randal’s heart glowed with hope and anticipation of the happier days in store for them in the neat little house that was the usual dwelling of the Abbey miller. And as Father Murphy fully sympathised with every hope and cheering prospect, rejoicing all the while in the thoughts of what joy this evening was to bring to Una—Una, his meek, patient, and sub-

mitting darling, who so richly deserved this reward ! This good shepherd also rejoiced with intense thankfulness that the weak and sore places in Randal's soul were so fully laid open, that they were now nearly healed.

By this time they were rapidly nearing the upper end of the village, and approaching the schoolhouse, so that Father Murphy stopped, and proposed to go forward first alone, to give a little warning to Una, as, in her weakened state, so sudden a surprise might do her harm. While they were making this little arrangement, two men came out of a gate leading into a field, and passed them on the road.

Molina then drew back a little into the shadow of the hedge, and watched Father Murphy's approach to the school.

In spite of every wish to keep to the letter of the priest's wishes, he could not help stealing gradually after him ; so that, as it were, in spite of himself, he followed him, and that not many paces behind.

And there was the dear schoolhouse, garlanded with its ivy, at the sight of which his heart beat fast, thinking that Una was within its walls. Was she sitting at her desk, correcting the copies ; or dressing our Lady's altar, and thinking of him ? or was she getting the supper ready for Michael and Nora ? He saw her now in his mental eye, as he had always seen her there, in her black dress, and her neat collar, and the little ivory crucifix round her neck, and her glorious coils of golden hair crowning her pretty head. There ! Now the door is opening, and Father Murphy is going in,

and as he does so a long yellow streak of candle and fire light streams out across the threshold. He thinks he can even hear their voices—*her* voice—in an exclamation of joy. Her form seems to dance before him.

How long it seemed, that earnest prayer, while he could hear the beating of his heart! The door opens again. Is it?—oh, yes! there can be no doubt. It is *her* form that flits through it into the shadow. It is her own light step, her own dear, darling voice that comes through the darkness! “Randal! Randal, *asthore!*!” She has not died! She has not cast him off! He makes one bound forward, but before he could reach her a wild scream smites his ear. Two men have rushed upon Una, and lifted her in their powerful arms. Randal, frenzied with horror and amazement, springs upon them, shouting for help. The school-door flies open and Father Murphy rushes out, followed by other figures. Suddenly, as Randal struggles and grapples, like a tiger, with the two immense ruffians, he sees the quick glitter of steel, and hears the deadly click of the lock. In the mad confusion he makes a wild rush before Father Murphy, and draws out his only weapon, his knife, to cover him.

A startling flash, a sharp report, a groan, and two bodies fall. The other ruffian, pinioned by Father Murphy, is seized by the police, who have come up at full gallop.

“Too late, too late!” They cannot save him now. They draw him gently from under the gigantic body of the fallen assassin, and they find him gasping for breath, and life ebbing at every

gasp from the wound. Quickly, quickly, Una tears her handkerchief in strips, and thrusts the fragments gently into the gaping flesh, that he may win time for one last shrift and absolution before death. She lifts his head with the utmost tenderness and strength of love, and pillows it upon her breast; and through her maze of horror and agony of woe she smiles with her own sweetest smile, and thanks him for all his love, and for coming home to her to die.

"Una! My Una! My own! Forgive me once. I did not think—I was mad—and very ill. Father Murphy knows. Tell her *all*. O God! Thy sweet will be done! Pulse of my heart, you were too good for me! Give me one kiss. Thank God, Father Murphy is safe!"

"Saved by you, my Randal. You die a martyr. Hush darling! Do not talk of forgiving. It is you who must pardon all my hasty words."

"Una!" gasped Randal, with one last, strong effort, "I thank you with all my strength for all your great love! God bless you! O Jesus! sweet Mary! Mother!"

There was a slight shivering sob. Una felt her hand faintly grasped, and then the young, noble head leaned sideways from her arms, the face set in a calm beauty, an unspeakable rest, which was the only seal stamped upon it by death.

...

They took him up with reverent care, and laid him on Una's bed at the school-house, where the last mournful offices were rendered, and much prayer was made.

But Una resisted all Father Murphy's entreaties



to let him take her away. She was tearless and perfectly calm, and nothing could prevent her from watching and praying beside the corpse till the day broke.

Then, while Father Murphy, bruised and sore in heart, knelt prostrate in spirit before God, preparing for his Mass, the sweetest sound of solemn joy-bells floated round him, and filled his heart with their thrilling, soothing melody. And he knew, while struck with awe and thankfulness of heart, that Father Lawrence was gone up to his eternal rest in the Heavenly City, scarcely passing through the purifying flames.

And with him, might it so be, the boy Randal, for whose soul he had offered his life?

So, instead of a requiem for the dead, he said a Mass of thanksgiving, with great peace of heart, commanding Una to Him who alone can heal such griefs as hers.

CHAPTER XXV.

"The end and the beginning vex
His reason ; many things perplex
With emotions, checks and counterchecks."
Tennyson.

It was Coolin who, without a moment's warning, had fallen dead in the scuffle, shot through the heart by the second barrel of Malone's revolver, which was either cocked without his knowing it, or in the confusion and madness of passion had been discharged at one time with that which took Molina's life. The remaining murderer, or whatever else, in the tumult of unbridled passion, he might have become, was of course Lefroy, or Malone; but as the police knew him only as Edmund Lefroy, he was committed under that name. Most of the villagers had suspected or seen his attachment to Una, and had speculated, in village fashion, whether she would end by going to Dublin "to be made a lady," or whether she would be faithful to her peasant-love. And the wisest, and those who knew her best, came, of course, to the latter conclusion.

So they thought it was a jealous frolic to which Randal had fallen a victim, and pitied both the young men. But when the police made known that two first-rate detectives were come down, and it became rumoured that Lefroy was no Dublin gentleman at all, but that he and Coolin were in truth runaway convicts of the most dangerous

class, for whom they had been on the watch, and for whom a large reward was offered,—then all ears were opened with horror, and all kinds of evidence began to string together towards fresh conclusions. And Malone's ravings in the station-house were so wild and wonderful, that the superintendent sent off a trusty messenger to Father Murphy, and asked him to come and examine the prisoner before he was taken to the gaol.

Now it had happened that Moylan had cunningly contrived to spend the day of the murder at a friend's house, at some distance in the country, in order that he might be quite out of the way, and out of suspicion of any knowledge or collusion of Una's being carried away, or the murders that perhaps might be committed by that same act. And by this course, as so often happens, his cunning overreached the mark, and brought upon him exactly what he sought to avoid. If he had remained at Peterstown, being a magistrate, and more often than not acting in Lord Powderhouse's place, he would have been able to prevent all intercourse with the prisoner except his own, and might perhaps have so wrought on Malone as to soothe his mind, and hinder him from divulging any thing that had passed between them, by a promise of escape, or false-swear ing at the trial. As it was, Father Murphy immediately walked up to the station-house, where, as soon as he fixed his eyes upon Malone and spoke to him in soothing words, reminding him that God's mercy had given him yet time to repent, the evil spirit seemed to be cast out, and the convict fell upon his knees. There he poured out his whole story—told how

the frantic desire to die in his own country had driven him in Australia to file his chains and escape, and to work his way back in an American vessel to Ireland, where Coolin and he had taken to an old familiar haunt and trade, distilling illicit whiskey for the mountain shebeen-houses. He told how they had met the agent, and he had engaged them in his plans ; how Una was to be wooed and carried away ; how Molina had been dogged and goaded to madness ; how Shamus had many times been the sole cause of her not being carried off ; and that the letter from the officer at Cork had been composed and written by him with Moylan's help and in his study. He added, with shuddering horror, how the agent had even designed Father Murphy's own death, and, as he believed, that of Brooker also, as an obstacle to his plans ; and, in short, he unwound to the priest's view all the meshes of the complicated web that had been woven round his flock, and gave him full permission to make what use of the knowledge he pleased.

Horror-struck and sick at heart, Father Murphy still thanked God for at last discovering the snares which he had felt, but never understood. He immediately sent off two messengers, one for Father Fitzsimon, and one to Sir Philip Ffrench, the nearest magistrate and largest proprietor at hand. Lord Powderhouse was in bed, with a severe attack of the gout. As soon as Sir Philip had arrived, which, as he drove his own mail-phaeton, was very soon indeed, and had heard the outline of the case, he sat down and made out the warrant for Moylan's arrest. Shamus was then

found out, and Father Murphy gave him into the charge of a proper person till his evidence (as far as it was valid) could be taken down. After a long and careful examination of Malone, Sir Philip courteously asked the favour of the two priests' company to Peterstown House, to which he drove.

Notwithstanding his gout, after reading the few pencil-lines sent up by Sir Philip, my Lord begged the three gentlemen to walk into his room, where he heard with horror and dismay the upshot of all that had taken place. The tears which he shed, and which did him honour, and the hearty and generous manner in which he humbled himself for his mal-administration and culpable over-indulgence to his subordinates, went far to laying a good foundation for the future. When they were about to retire he held out his hand to the two priests, and begged them to favour him for the future with their suggestions and advice.

And when they had taken their leave, Sir Philip remained for some time to point out to my Lord how deeply faulty he had been, in a country like Ireland, to allow his sister and his agent to hoodwink his eyes, and to act upon such manifest and bitter prejudice towards his defenceless tenants.

In short, he read my Lord a round lecture, as he well and wisely knew how; and told him, when his gout was gone, he should come and stay at Castle Ffrench, and see how the estate and villagers fared under a free rule; and especially how they fared without an agent, for although he had bailiffs and stewards, he was his own agent, and no one ever came between him and his people but the

parish-priest. "And, my Lord," he concluded, "look into it, I beg of you, if you wish to end your days in peace. If you want to evangelise Ireland, do it by example, and not by force."

And my Lord did look into it accordingly; and the further he looked, the more he saw and the wiser he became. He made up his mind to send for his nephew and heir-at-law, Colonel Powderhouse, and put his affairs into his hands. And as he was a temperate, experienced Irish landholder, *who had never been an absentee*, and who was a warm friend of Sir Philip Ffrench, my Lord profited largely by his experience, and Peterstown fell on better times.

Practically, however, this came about chiefly by the help of two allies. One of these we know well; but after a while there were two.

To finish with the bad characters, then, and lose sight of them altogether, it should be said, that as Malone turned Queen's evidence, he was pardoned and went out to America, where he is most likely at this moment fighting, adorned with all manner of stars, and, for any thing that we know, may hereafter be one means of founding some brand-new Imperial Republic or Republican Empire out of the chaos and old night which reign in that tumultuous hemisphere.

But Malachi Moylan, having no sacrament of confession to fall back upon, nor faith to believe, proudly disdained the temporal punishments of the law, and hung himself in his cell. He was found by a turnkey, cold and stiff, with a demoniacal sneer still lingering on his lip; as if, while

scoffing at every thing in this transient life, he also, *while he could*, persisted in scoffing at the eternal life which lay beyond.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Patience, and abnegation of self, and devotion to others,
This was the lesson a life of trial and sorrow had taught her;
So was her love diffused, but, like to some odorous spices,
Suffered no waste nor loss, though filling the air with aroma."

Longfellow.

After the inquest had been held, and the funeral day was come, and Una was dressing the open coffin with wreaths of ivy and fresh spring flowers, a low knock was heard at the schoolhouse door, which opened immediately after. A light step crossed the floor, a woman's dark dress floated by, and Eudora Powderhouse threw herself on her knees beside the bier, in a passion of woe, which seemed to break up the very flood-gates of life.

Una, startled and moved by the vehement rush of the flood, tried what she could to soothe and stem the tide, and, going round to the other side of the bier, laid her hand on Eudora's head. The touch, the softness and sweetness of the loving and lovely tones, the gentle firmness of the holy words she spoke, seemed to act with power upon Eudora. She raised her queenly head, now all humbled into the dust, lifted her swollen, heavy

eyes, and, throwing one arm round Una, drew her gently down to kneel beside her, and then hid her face on her breast. In the act, in the mute gesture, there lay such a world of confession and sorrowful pleading, that Una's eyes filled with tears. To her own unspeakable marvel she found herself soothing and caressing Miss Powderhouse as if she had been one of her own school-children. And it was almost a child's face (in expression) that was after a while lifted up, and Miss Powderhouse whispered, "Una, dearest Una, can you ever forgive me, or bear the sight of me? Will you ever let me be your friend—your sister?"

"You!—Miss Powderhouse!—you must not say so!"

"Hush, Una! Hush! I must tell you something."

A little light seemed to dawn on her sorrowful face.

"Una, I have been to see your strange priest, Father Fitzsimon. I have seen him twice, and I mean some day to be a Catholic, and I do hope to be forgiven for all!"

Una grasped her hand, and bowed down her head upon it. Oh, was, then, the martyred blood poured out for this? Could any life of earthly joy and affection be weighed in the balance with the rich gift of this soul? Her thoughts flew up to the crystal sea before God's Throne, and there she seemed to hold converse with her lost one—lost, and yet for ever found; for he was safe and at home, winning blessings for those he had left. Again, as in her dream, she seemed to see him clothed in light, and as then she heard

the words repeated, "*We cannot be together yet, but very soon.*"

But all she could do or say was to press her lips gently on Eudora's hand, and murmur, "Oh, I am glad ! I am thankful and glad !"

So when Michael and Nora walked next to Randal's bier, the amazed and wondering villagers saw Miss Powderhouse following them with Una, and little Martin walking between them.

The long rays of the setting sun shone brightly and softly on the bier, the coffin open, according to the custom of the place, that all might take a farewell look at him they followed to the grave. One after another, those who had watched him from the cradle, and taken pride in his growing beauty and strength, now came to look at the pale glory of that noble face, hushed in massive and calmest repose, and to sprinkle holy water on the dust of the faithful departed.

No one could do this without loud sobs and tears, and deep and manly grief. But one and all still felt rather the triumph of following the relics of a martyr, than the ordinary sorrow for the dead. They stood round with kindled and elevated hearts to hear what Father Fitzsimon said ; for Father Murphy could not trust himself to speak for the one who had laid down his life for himself.

His words were few and deeply moved, and very solemn. He touched gently upon the youth and prospects of the dead, and how this orphan boy had been loved and watched by all his friends. It might be called a lot of the saddest kind, that one so beloved and bright and beautiful, should be cut

off suddenly by a violent hand. And yet he called it one of the most glorious he had ever known.

"Just when restored happiness, and hope for the future, and his approaching marriage, should have made him most love and cherish his life and safety, after a return to his duties and a full reconciliation with God, their beloved brother had freely offered himself as a sacrifice to save the life of his priest. It was not by accident, or by any chance impulse, but by generously offering himself as a shield, that he had been accepted as a victim of charity for another. 'Greater love hath no man than this: that he lay down his life for a friend.' He who can do this follows the most nearly in the steps of Him Who laid down His life for us all. May the perpetual light shine upon him! May he rest in peace!"

Low and deep, like a muffled bell, the response ran round—"Amen!" Then the old white-haired Michael Macnamara, leading Nora, stepped forward, and they softly kissed the brow of the dead, and sprinkled the holy water with a reverent hand. Then he gently closed the coffin.

They lowered him slowly into the grave, and chanted the responses; and when the earth fell on the coffin, Una felt the shuddering sob that ran through Eudora at the sound. But she herself was calm.

And presently the mound was dressed with fresh green sods and wreaths of spring flowers, and the temporary wooden cross was decked with garlands, as was the custom in that place.

When every one was gone, Una laid herself down beside the grave, and it seemed that her

heart would surely break with that great sorrow. But she offered her sacrifice again to God and renewed her fervent desire to do His whole will. Then she kissed the sod with one long deep kiss, and rose up and went with Eudora to the presbytery, where she was much consoled.

Years went by, and, as we have said, Peterstown saw better times. Exeter Hall resigned his living, and went out to Honolulu, where he distinguished himself by translating the Book of the Pentateuch into such Scriptures as would greatly have astonished Moses. Israel Brooker, much improved by experience, also left Peterstown, but what became of him never transpired. Miss Powderhouse firmly believed he would die a Catholic.

After some lapse of time, Father Fitzsimon was removed by his superiors to India, where, after establishing two colleges of the Society, and receiving numberless souls into the true fold, he offered himself to serve in the cholera-hospital in a mountain district, from which the ordinary helps had fled in dismay. And there, after imitating St. Francis Xavier in his zeal, his charity, and his winning of souls, his worn-out frame gave way to the disease, and he died, like him, nearly alone, with his crucifix in his hand, and went to receive his crown.

But at Peterstown there was comfort and help. Eudora Powderhouse served an apprenticeship to Una. She went with her to all the cabins ; she learnt thoroughly to know the people ; she sought, early and late, to repair her former misdoings and her cherished pride. She took revenge upon her-

self by unshrinking patience and lowliest service of the poor of Christ. She had great means, but she looked upon them only as lent, and herself as a steward for his goods.

And thus it was that Father Murphy in his green old age, and Colonel Powderhouse, had two allies in managing Peterstown.

As for the other one, she was the very salt that kept savour in the whole work. Bound and consecrated to God by special vows, permitted and renewed by the priest, Una put on the cord and habit of St. Francis under her ordinary dress, and in true poverty and purity of spirit walked in the footsteps of Jesus, and ministered to His beloved poor.

Wherever there was sorrow and want ; wherever there was sin or shame ; wherever there was fierce temptation, or reckless guilt, or sullen despair ; wherever contrition and the strivings of grace,—there was Una to be found, and never was there in vain. Meek and pitiful, simple as a child, fearless as a lion, nothing was too hard, too bad, too black for her to brave, that by all means she might win some soul for Christ.

We can take our last look at her now, in the early summer dawn, kneeling at her little window, looking in upon the church and the Blessed Sacrament, which as it was her only Love, was also permitted to be her Neighbour. For, like Bona and the solitaries of old, she had one little bare chamber made for her at the end of the church, and there she lived and died.

And as we look at her pale and wasted, but

sweetest face for the last time, we rejoice too, as Peterstown did, in knowing "Sister Una;" and at having once, at least, beheld the actual truth of those wonderful words of the great Apostle: "Now I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me."





